MAUD LINDEN'S LOVERS.

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CHAPTER VI.

INTRODUCES CAPTAIN BERESFORD.

STARTLING as the revelation appeared to Mr. Baxter, the earnestness of his friend compelled him to believe in its actual truth. Of Dr. Lee's sagacity and plain common-sense, he entertained a high opinion, and in his veracity he trusted more implicity than he, as a lawyer, would have considered discreet in regard to most of his fellow human creatures.

"I do not see any option, under the circumstances, but to take the young fellow into your confidence, and tell him the story as you have told it to Maud and me," he said, after pondering the facts in his mind.

"So I think, Baxter; and I am glad your opinion accords with mine," his companion replied.

"You are yourself in the belief that those incidents of four-and-twenty years ago were so mysterious and inexplicable as to imply some hidden crime of the darkest dye. Now, for my part, though I know but little of our young friend's antecedents, I am aware that he was merely adopted in his childhood by the benevolent old man whose name he bears. I believe he was a foundling; if so, that fact seems to tend to corroborate your notion that somewhere there has been foul play. We may, perhaps disentagle the chain of mystery, if we can trace backwards from the time Beresford took the child to the time when you assisted at his birth."

Finally, it was agreed that the two gentlemen should broach the matter to Arthur Beresford that night; and Dr. Lee, having secured the privacy of the room to themselves, related to him that story with which this history opens.

Arthur listened attentively, and certainly was interested in what the doctor said; but when mention was made of the strange mark upon his bosom, his face flushed, and despite the pain inflicted by the exertion, he sprang to his feet.

"At last, then," he ejaculated, drawing a deep breath, and

clenching his hands in the excitement which convulsed him—"at last, then, I can lift an end of the veil which obscures my birth Dr. Lee, Heaven is my witness that it has been the one great object of my life to lift that veil. I know that the name I bear is not my own; but I have always hoped and fancied that I am not the ignoble, nameless creature people have thought me. Give me but a clue, the faintest clue, to clear my mother's honour and my birth from shame, and I swear in the light of Heaven that I will unceasingly follow that clue, and if there be a living man who has done her wrong, I will hunt him down through all the world, to the bitter end, till justice has wreaked upon him the punishment of his crime."

"If injustice has been done to you, Arthur Beresford, both Dr. Lee and myself will assuredly assist you to the utmost in compelling him who has committed it to make such restitution to you as may be. But we are at present in a very early stage of the proceedings to entertain trancendental ideas of wreaking vengeance and all that sort of thing. Meantime, that progress may be made, tell us what you know, if anything, of your early life—your very early life, I mean, before you were adopted as the son of Mr. Beresford."

Saying which, Mr. Baxter, who having now something in the way of business to attend to, was sharp and almost cynical in his tone and language, took a sheet of letter-paper and a pen, in order to make notes for his guidance.

Arthur Beresford had very little, however, to tell. He simply knew that Mr. Beresford, who had always acted like a parent to him, had adopted him out of pure charity when he was quite a babe some three-and-twenty years ago; that the woman who was supposed to be his mother had deserted him to his fate, and that nothing had been heard of her from that day to this.

"These are but poor data upon which to construct a theory," the lawyer said, throwing away his pen in despair.

"No doubt, Mr. Beresford, Uncle Tom—as he has always taught me to call him—knows more of the details than I have been able to tell," said Arthur.

"The best thing I can do," said Mr. Baxter as if thinking his thoughts aloud—"the best thing I can do will be to spare an afternoon and run down to see Tom Beresford myself."

And this, with the concurrence of Arthur and Dr. Lee, it was settled he should do.

Accordingly, as soon as Arthur Beresford had been inducted into his new duties at the Candlestick-makers' Hall, upon which duties he insisted upon entering the day he had first appointed, Mr. Baxter took a ticket at London Bridge station, and travelled by

the Mid-Kent line to the station nearest to the village of Oakhurst.

To reach Oakhurst you have some three miles to walk across country from the nearest railway station, and when at length you arrive there, you find yourself in one of the quaint little villages that Kent abounds in.

It was here, in a small cottage, which standing in the main road, but just out of the village proper, that Mr. Beresford, Arthur's patron and benefactor, resided.

Mr. Baxter had never been to the village before; but he experienced little difficulty in discovering the cottage where Mr. Beresford—or Captain Beresford, as he was generally called in the neighbourhood—lived.

"Can you direct me to Mr. Beresford's?" he had demanded of a countryman in a smock-frock, who was lounging at the door of the Red Lion Inn.

"Be it the captain, zur, you want?"

"The captain? Oh, no doubt it is the same."

"If it's the captain, zur; Lor' bless yer! everybody knows him in these parts."

Saying that the countryman marched into the middle of the high road, and pointed with the end of the clay pipe he was smoking towards the cottage about which Mr. Baxter was inquiring.

Mr. Baxter smiled to himself as he pursued his journey as directed. Somehow the evident popularity of his old acquaintance Tom Beresford, appeared to amuse him greatly.

"I must not forget to call him Captain," he thought, as he turned into the garden which led up to the cottage-door.

Now, Mr. Baxter was well aware that "captain" in the case of Mr. Beresford was merely a title of courtesy. That gentleman has passed his early years on the ocean, it is true; but he had never served his queen and country in the Royal Navy itself. Probably if he had done so he would not have been able to retire with the comfortable little "independence" he possessed at the comparatively youthful age, for a sailor, of fifty-five.

But he had certainly spent nearly half a century of his life upon the waves, having entered a merchant ship as a cabin-boy, when he was not much over ten years of age; and from this humble position he had worked his way upwards through sheer honesty of purpose and unceasing industry, till he had actually obtained the command of a ship. Hence, when, having saved a small competency, he retired to enjoy the repose of the country for the remainder of his career, he was known as "Mr. Beresford," "the Captain," or "Captain Tom Beresford," indifferently.

Mr. Baxter rang the bell beside the cottage-door, which was designated by an inscription as the "visitor's bell." The clang sounded from afar, apparently from the back of the premises, and after about a minute's delay one of the windows upstairs was thrown open, and a strange-looking being, with a head of fiery-red hair cut close to the skull, peeped out.

"Billoa, there!" sang out the head, in a manner that showed red hair and sound lungs were compatible.

Mr. Baxter looked up.

"Billoa, Tom Beresford!" cried he, in the manner which to himself appeared most nautical.

"Who are you, mate? and what do you want?"

"Don't you remember me, captain? Hugh Baxter, you know? And I want you to open the door and let me in."

"Thunder!" roared the head, which instantly disappeared, and was followed by the sound of the window being closed with a bang.

In a very short space of time the door was opened, and Mr. Baxter was confronting an individual who in appearance was certainly remarkable.

Tall and gaunt, with a slight stoop, for the captain was now quite sixty-five years of age; a face that was bronzed and deeply furrowed, a huge Roman nose and bushy eyebrows and beard, and both of the same bright colour as his hair, which only just here and there was turning grey. He had but one arm, having lost his left one through an accident years ago; and fancying he was something like Lord Nelson, he was pleased to wear a blue swallow-tailed coat with brass buttons, the left sleeve of which, with the arm-stump, was fastened across his breast, to look as much like that naval hero as circumstances would permit.

In a moment Mr. Baxter's hand was clasped by the Captain's remaining one, in a grasp of iron.

"Why, bless my soul, mate, who would have thought of seeing you aboard here? But turn in, man, turn in, you'll none the less be welcome to Tom Beresford on that score."

The captain's parlour was a little room in which two persons might sit comfortably, possibly three might have been, under exceptional circumstances, accommodated; but the two huge wooden arm-chairs, a sofa and a small loo table in the centre, gave the apartment the appearance of fulness, when the captain sat in one chair and a friend in the other. On the walls, hung several excessively marine paintings, with ships in full sail and distressingly blue skies; over the doorway was a group of buffalo horns, brought by the captain from foreign lands, and on the sideboard a model of the "Summer Cloud," the good ship which the captain had last commanded.

"The chief object of my visit, Captain," Mr. Baxter began as he seated himself in one of the huge wooden chairs.

"Hold on there, mate!" roared the captain, energetically waiving his right arm, and even the stump of his left, "Avast, I say, before we have any yarns we'll just have a drop of something warm, you know, just to whet the whistle with."

"Not at present, my dear sir; a thousand thanks!"

"Not at present, eh!" repeated the captain in a scornful tone, "Not at present, eh!" then the voice rising into a perfect roar, "But, by the Lord Harry, sir, I say, yes! Here, Jack Bowling! Jack Bowling! dang it, Jack, look alive and bring us in the pipes and grog."

A squat-looking sailor with a wooden leg responsed to this appeal, and, with a jerk of the head, a scrape of the foot, and "All right, Cap'n," disappeared only to re-enter the room with a tray of jugs, bottles, and glasses; and with such rapidity was this accomplished as to suggest the idea that Jack Bowling had already prepared the things in readiness for the expected signal to produce them.

Then the captain pushed the tray towards his friend, and uttered a strange loud, rumbling sound, which was certainly not a chuckle nor exactly a laugh, since the captain's mouth was firmly closed, but was, nevertheless, the captain's usual mode of laughing and expressing his content.

"Now mate, help yourself; that rum never paid dooty, or I'm not Tom Beresford, and that 'bacca—don't smoke? thunder! I do, then, so here goes; and now Baxter, my boy, give us the yarn, if you like."

"Very little yarn, captain, have I to tell—in fact, I want you first to tell me one. I want to learn all you can possibly remember as to the manner in which you came to adopt the young fellow Arthur Beresford."

The captain gave a yell and flourished his arms or rather his arm, wildly.

"How is the youngster—dear boy? how is he?" he cried.

"Oh, he's quite well now, captain, with the exception of a bruise or two which he received the other day, when he rescued two young ladies from peril."

"Did he, though—did he, though?" repeated the captain, his eyes blinking with delight. "Ah, mate, that's a fine lad, a d——d fine lad! But I hope he isn't hurt much, eh?"

Mr. Baxter hastened to re-assure him on that head, but the worthy captain was not easily to be convinced, and could not refrain from shaking his head doubtfully two or three times, and muttering his own inward opinion that he had a d——d half a mind

to set sail up to London himself, and see how the youngster was progressing.

As soon, however, as Mr. Baxter had succeeded in allaying the captain's unfounded alarm as to the health of his *protége*, he proceeded to unfold the business which had brought him to Oakhurst; first of all giving him a brief outline of the story related by Dr. Lee. To make this clear to Captain Beresford's understanding was, however, not the easiest of matters, for the captain's mind was somewhat slow at grasping all the facts. He sat, for the most part in deep silence, opening and shutting his mouth, elevating and letting fall his bushy eyebrows, and in other ways manifesting the engrossing interest he experienced in the narration.

"Avast there, mate, and let me take the bearings," he interrupted at a certain point. "So this here Dr. Lee, or what-yer-may-call-him, as he came down the stairs looked through the port-hole and made out the Goodwin Lights, eh? And where was the d—d old woman all the time? Oh, she was upstairs with the poor young wench and the babby, was she? Oh, well, all right mate, heave away!"

So Mr. Baxter proceeded with his story; but when he mentioned the strange mark on the baby's breast, which first he had reserved till the story was told, the captain's face was an object worth looking at, gradually it lengthened, his mouth opened and seemed fixed, while his eyes appeared ready to start from their sockets and his eyebrows to stand on end. In his astonishment the clay pipe he was smoking fell from his hand.

"Why, my youngster has got just such a mark as that on his breast—just as if it had been tattooed!" he ejaculated at length.

"Precisely so, my dear sir," Mr. Baxter replied; "and as Dr. Lee is strongly in the belief that the mark on that infant is identical with that on the young man, the plain inference is that they are the same."

"Walker! Tell that to the marines, mate. Hasn't that youngster been in my cabin and along of me for the last three-and-twenty years?"

"True, captain; but the child was not yours; and what I want to do is to trace him up to the date when you first took him?"

Hereupon Captain Beresford flew into a great rage.

"Thunder, sir! and what do you mean by that?" he roared, his form seeming to shake with frenzy, "If the child wasn't mine, who's, the devil, was he? Haven't I brought him up and stuck to him through thick and thin? and by the Lord Harry, sir, I'd like to know who's got a better right to him than Tom Beresford?"

Mr. Baxter, to appease him, assured the irate captain that no one in the world was likely to dispute his claims on the affection

and gratitude of Arthur, and that Arthur himself was not in the least likely to forget them. He then strove to show that the only object of investigation into the young man's birth and parentage was the belief entertained by Dr. Lee and himself that Arthur was probably the victim of some secret villany, and might, perhaps, be the rightful owner of a name and fortune out of which he wa now being kept.

"Maybe there's some truth in that," replied the captain molified, but still rather surly at the idea of any stranger claiming the affections of his adopted son; "maybe there's some truth in that, and anyhow, if so be, Tom Beresford is not the man to stand in the youngster's light; contrariwise, show me how to give the poor lad a helping hand, and gad, sir, I guess I'm still as good a man as that scoundrelly land-lubber who did the poor young woman and the babby wrong, or the she-wolf of a woman who backed him up either."

Thus was Captain Beresford induced to tell all that he knew concerning our hero's early history. Unfortunately, however, he had but little to tell that would throw much light on the mystery which Mr. Baxter was desirous to elucidate.

The captain's own version may as well be condensed; for in, truth, his style of narration was more remarkable for ornateness than brevity, and his language for power rather than elegance. It was an idiosyncracy of him, as well as of most sailors, that he could say but very little without swearing a great deal.

The facts, as Mr. Baxter gathered them, were simply these.

Some three-and-twenty years ago, while Thomas Beresford was only the first officer on board the good ship "Sprite," and while that vessel was lying in the West India Dock, taking in cargo for the Cape of Good Hope, he and a brother officer were out on the spree, and had, as the captain admitted, been drinking rather freely. In one of the streets near the Commercial Road, they met a young woman with a child in her arms, and the young woman appearing to recognise the captain's comrade, Jack Windlass by name, the three got into conversation and ultimately the woman agreed to go with them to the theatre. Before, however, they did this, Jack Windlass insisted upon standing the others some more drink; and while they were thus enjoying themselves, Mr. Beresford must needs admire the baby, which its mamma presently, with great good nature, permitted him to nurse.

Now it happened, though how the captain could never explain, that while he was singing "Hush-a-bye Baby upon the Tree Top," his friend fell asleep, and when he himself turned round the mother had disappeared. What he was to do with that baby he did not know, and when he woke up Jack Windlass, to ascertain his views, Jack was as much confounded as he

Jack did not know the woman any more than that she used to live in the village where he was born, and that her name was Susan Jones. The "Sprite" was to set sail for the Cape by the next tide, and the two officers had to be on board that night. So they took the baby with them, agreeing that each would bear his share of its support, and the two be joint proprietors. Ultimately the captain became so fond of their charge that Jack Windlass sold his share for a five-pound note, and thus Arthur became the worthy captain's own property absolutely.

CHAPTER VII.

A SOUVENIR.

Was Maud Linden aware of the flame she had kindled in the heart of Arthur Beresford? Do young ladies—pure and innocent young ladies who have scarcely left the nursery-room, I mean—become conscious of the fact, that certain young gentlemen are smitten with their charms, and that certain others are utterly impregnable to their fascinations?

We may safely answer both these questions in the affirmative. During the few weeks that Maud remained in London, Arthur Beresford spent many evenings at the house of Dr. Lee: and it did not require many such evenings to cause Maud to perceive that the young man courted her society especially, and regarded her with an amount of deferential attention which he did not accord to others—not even to Emily Baxter or her sister, when they might happen to be there.

And this consciousness of the young man's preference grew upon her gradually. As free from personal vanity, as it is possible for any young girl who is pretty—and who is constantly being told that she is so—to be, Maud Linden was aware that Arthur's voice sank to a lower and richer cadence when he spoke to her, that his eyes followed her as she moved about the room, that the colour mantled to his face when her name was mentioned, that his hand lingered to retain her own, and trembled perhaps at the touch when they parted.

His eyes too! Reader, dull must be the eye that cannot speak more eloquently than the lips can utter! And Arthur Beresford's eyes were as expressive, almost, as Maud Linden's own. The light would come and go; those eyes would flash with fun, and an instant afterwards become unfathomably deep with sentiment or deepest thought. One could almost affirm the passing fancies of his mind by the lights and shadows that flitted athwart his face.

What wonder, then, that Maud Linden became increasingly conscious that young Beresford regarded her differently from the way in which he regarded other girls,—that he considered her prettier than the Baxters, one and all, though he uttered with his tongue no word to that effect; that he loved best to hear her sing those simple, old-fashioned songs, which were identified in the group as especially "Maud's;" that he would listen eagerly and spellbound to the touching cadences of her sentiment; and that his heart-cords vibrated with emotion at her voice, either when she spoke to him or sang!

And Maud Linden herself—was her heart free? Let us hasten to assure our discreet and gentle reader with a most emphatic "Of course!" What proper young lady ever loved until the object of that love had first asked her for it? Yet Maud certainly considered Arthur Beresford a very nice young fellow, and liked him very well. This she did not scruple to own, and did not blush very much, when Emily Baxter or the laughing, dark-eyed Bella, teased her about the impression she had made upon young Beresford's heart.

And to be perfectly straightforward and candid, we must own that Maud Linden was not displeased at the deference and devotion that Arthur displayed. Always scrupulously neat in her dress, Maud at this time became especially fastidious when she knew that Arthur Beresford was downstairs. Blue was her favourite colour; and on these occasions a little blue bow upon her bosom, or a blue ribbon in her soft brown hair, would not be wanting. And, somehow, she soon came to know intuitively which songs and which pieces of music Mr. Beresford liked best.

And was this love on Maud's part? and was that respectful preference on Arthur's part that Maud had such small inclination to suppress, was *that* love too? If Maud had asked herself these questions, perhaps she would have answered, No! For Maud knew—and, may be, this was why she sighed so often of late and became melancholy—that love between this pair was *impossible!*

Impossible! Maud knew that cruel fate destined her to be another's wife! The wife of one she had never seen—of whom she had heard but little, and that little rather of evil than of good report. She had been taught to look to this match as her settled destiny; that was to be a brilliant one, withal: and hitherto, though she had regarded that destiny, naturally, without the glowing aspirations and enthusiastic hopes with which youth waits on marriage when love attends it, she had prepared herself to accept, as her lord and master, him whom the fates had given her. She knew that honest English girls were often given and taken in that

way. She fancied in her imagination the portrait of what she would hope her lord might be; and whether or no the ideal should surpass the reality, she would faithfully fulfil her plighted vows. But it had scarcely entered her thoughts that she could oppose, or would wish to oppose, that marriage which everybody around her spoke of as almost an accomplished fact.

But now her contemplated marriage with Sir Jasper Estcourt grew utterly repugnant to her. She would not talk of it—she could not talk of it now without a petulance that never before in her life she had displayed. The colour would mount to her cheek, which would afterwards grow deathly pale, when Sir Jasper's name was mentioned; and she would turn the conversation, with rapid and sometimes irrelevant sentences, to any other topic that might suggest itself.

Why should she be called upon to marry a man she had never seen, whose evil reputation the most friendly sought to palliate under the euphemism "a little wild," who was not young, she knew, who she was certain now would be hateful to her? Why should she be called upon to sacrifice her young life, with its hopes and aspirations, that were now struggling for life within her bosom?

She could answer these questions herself. For *money!* She knew that the sacrifice was to be made to gratify the whim of an ambitious old aunt who had willed that she should marry this man, and who, no doubt, was utterly unconscious that she was decreeing aught but happiness for the young and innocent girl.

The particulars of all these arrangements and testamentary decrees shall be disclosed in their proper places. Maud did not quite understand the details herself. She only knew the broad fact that now haunted her thoughts like the recollection of a dismal dream.

But how was she to oppose that fate? Could she oppose it? Could she defy everybody who loved her and desired her prosperity? She knew not. Perhaps she could, but not now. So she sighed, and strove to put away the nightmare of her thoughts. She was only nineteen now, and she was not bound to marry till she was twenty-one.

Two years of freedom were thus still her own, and what may not be accomplished in two years when we are nineteen?

So when Arthur Beresford was in the drawing-room Maud would find the prettiest bows for her bosom and the bluest ribbon to deck her hair. She would sing her selected songs, which were, no doubt, the most sentimental in her *répertoire*, and those evenings were happy ones to her.

She was going to her own home to keep the Christmas time, and it was the last time that she and Beresford would meet. She had been warbling one of those melancholy songs, and Beresford had been at the piano by her side to turn over for her the music-leaves.

"So, to-morrow, Miss Lindon, you will leave us?" Arthur said.

"Yes to-morrow," she answered, and her voice was as low as his.

Just then, in turning towards her music, a violet fell from her bosom upon the floor. Arthur picked it up.

"I should like to keep it as a souvenir," he said half shyly, half beseechingly.

She smiled and turned away her face, answering—

"It will soon fade and die, I fear."

"Nevertheless," whispered Arthur, "I will keep it till I die."

It is probable that neither Arthur nor she knew any import in the token. It was a flower, and it was hers. So that little withered violet may, perhaps, be found in some secret desk or drawer of Arthur Beresford's when long years have passed away.

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK DOWNING'S DIFFICULTIES.

THE heart of a man who has never been in love is like an album in which is written no poetry. Arthur Beresford's album had been by this time almost filled with the poetical contributions of Maud Lindon, though I fancy that young lady would have laid but little claims to be thought a poet. Maybe in her school-days she had done a little that way; but such juvenile outpourings, if they existed at all now, were safely locked up in some specially private drawer, along with bags of lavender and rose-leaves, and various gushing letters that vowed eternal affection from "her devoted Selina," and others of her former schoolfellows. Of late times, such poetry as was in her nature had been *felt* by the poor girl, but had not been verbally expressed.

Arthur, however, knew nothing of that wicked old aunt who had decreed that Maud Lindon should become the bride of the *blâse* and middle-aged Sir Jasper Estcourt. So he turned over the pages of his album and gloated over the imperishable poetry which Maud's bright eyes had written there.

I am afraid I must own that about this period Arthur began

to believe that he, too, was a poet. Certainly a great deal of his leisure was spent by him in his own chamber, with the door locked, and pens, ink, and paper—tinted and perfumed paper, look you—outspread berore him. How fond he became of Mr. Alfred Tennyson and some of that gentleman's exquisite poems, and his landlady used to declare that her lodger would be so constantly singing, "Come into the garden, Maud, for the black bat night hath flown," that she almost imagined he had secured the assistance of a certain popular tenor in his room, till she became accustomed to the sound, and knew that the young man's only companions were his tinted note-paper and his pens and ink.

But who, I wonder, was the author of the sonnet that appeared in the "North Brixton Gazette," and which began,

> "Sweet little Maud, with soft brown hair,
> With the fragrant lips and the gleaming pearls" &c. &c.

Well, perhaps, nobody can answer that question satisfactorily; the editor found it in his letter-box one morning, into which the carefully written copy had been dropped anonymously. But there was no more to indicate the authorship of the contributor than was the case with the "Letters of Junius." Possibly Arthur Beresford might have been able to throw some light on the subject, but he is silent, and if aught he knows he is but little likely to tell it now, unless, maybe, in a laughing mood he may whisper confessions in a certain lady's ear, from whom he has abandoned all right to conceal anything.

Dick Downing and Arthur found pleasure in each other's society during those winter evenings when official work was done.

These two gentlemen became mutually confidential in all their affairs, and vowed eternal friendship; just as "the devoted Selina" had done in those sacred letters possessed by Maud. Dick would talk of Lucy, and bye-and-by Arthur would talk of Maud. Dick, indeed, soon understood the exact condition of his friend's heart, and was very sympathetic and hopeful that matters might turn out well. Dick was reverently shown that souvenir which, Arthur had secured the last evening he had spent in the society of Maud; and it is not unlikely that Richard Downing might, perhaps, have had something to say as to the authorship of "Sweet little Maud, with the soft brown hair,"—if he had chosen to be faithless. But Dick was discreet in the affairs of everybody except himself.

However unsubstantial may have been the matrimonial castles in the air which it pleased Arthur to build for himself and his divinity, Dick Downing appeared to be progressing with his schemes famously.

"I limit myself to beer at lunch, dinner, and supper, now, old fellow," he said. "I never smoke till I get home in the evening; I haven't been into a music-hall for the last three weeks; and the only dance I've had was one night with Lucy, when we went together to a little kick-up at a friend's; and I thought the old lady—her mother, I mean—would have never recovered from the shock to her nerves, because I didn't take her home till eleven o'clock. The fellows chaff me at the Rural Church Regi-tration, you know; but somehow, Beresford, since I've had you to fall back upon, I haven't cared so much what they say. Anyhow, I like Lucy better than I do them; and, in fact, we've arranged to be married in the spring."

"I wish you happiness, Dick, with all my heart, and Lucy too."

"Thanks, old-fellow! I know you do; and I think I should be happy, even now in anticipation, if it were not for two things."

"What are they?"

"I'm afraid I owe a lot of money, Beresford, and that's the fact. Bills, you know," returned Dick, gloomily—"bills that I have signed, like a great fool, for money that I have never received. I haven't many debts, except bills to the rascally Jews—no one would trust me for one reason."

"Do you owe much, Dick? I am sorry to hear this."

"Goodness knows," answered the young man, shrugging his shoulders. "They say so; but I haven't had much, I know. They make it out that I have accepted paper for more than a hundred pounds; and I dare say it is true enough. However, come what may, I am resolved that I will never put pen to an acceptance again. My salary is a hundred-and-eighty a year, and I mean to pay off the accursed things fifteen pounds a quarter, at any rate."

"I wish I could help you, Dick—perhaps I can to a small extent," said Arthur, kindly; and after a pause, "I can spare you ten pounds, at all events. What is the other obstacle to your happiness?

Dick shifted uneasily in his chair and burst into a forced laugh.

"The old lady, the mother-in-law, I am afraid, will not conduce to our domestic bliss," he said, ruefully. "She is a respectable woman and all that, of course, and Lucy is confoundedly attached to her; but—but—"

"She is not very cheerful, I suppose you would say?"

"Well,—she is not; and that's the plain truth. I try to like her, you know, for Lucy's sake; but she is a fearful wet blanket, and, besides that, she is——"

"Is what?"

"As selfish as any old woman can be."

But need you live with her, Dick? Does Lucy insist on that?"

Dick shook his head dismally.

"The mother insists on it; though I don't believe but what Lucy would be willing enough she should be away. But, bless you! the old lady goes into fits at the notion of being separated from her daughter; and Lucy is too gentle—God bless her!—to have a will of her own. She is quite under the old woman's thumb; and if she were to tell Lucy not to marry me, I firmly believe it would be all up with us, though I think Lucy would break heart; and—and I think I should break mine."

"It is all a great pity—a very great pity," said Arthur, with a sigh.

"I know how it is, Beresford—I can see it all; she thinks I am a fool; and I may have been one, in the life I have led, but not in that way," Dick exclaimed, his face flushing very red. "She is a selfish old manœuverer. She hasn't got a penny in the world, except a small annuity that was bought when her husband died; and as soon as she saw I liked Lucy, she made up her mind that I should be a good match for her daughter—as good, at least, with my situation, as any she was likely to achieve; that I would do capitally as a sort of provider for both of them So she so settled it. God knows, Beresford, that I love Lucy fondly enough now; but upon my honour, at first, I believe I had little to do with the love-making."

On the whole, Arthur Beresford was reduced to confess that his friend's matrimonial prospects, however near they might be, were somewhat clouded. He was fain to remember that Maud Linden's mamma was not a widow, and that Maud was not her only child. On the contrary, Master Jack Linden was as thorough an English boy as could be found in the Blue Coat School, or Christ's Hospital, where he was being educated.

Master Jack used frequently to pay visits to his uncle, Dr. Lee, and here Arthur formed that young gentleman's acquaintance. Very staunch comrades did these two become; for the reason, I doubt not so far as Arthur was concerned, that Jack was blessed by Providence with a sister. But as our hero learnt from the boy certain particulars important to this history, we will begin a new page to relate them.

CHAPTER IX.

A FRIENDLY WARNING.

If pretty women bring trouble to the other sex—and Talleyrand, we know, held it as an axiom that they were the root of all trouble, to brothers, at least, they must be regarded as an unmitigated good. Jack Linden had a pretty sister, and he experienced the benefit of the fact in ways that were manifold.

Supposing Maud Linden had ben the sister of another fellow, what chance then would poor Jack, in his blue gown and yellow stockings, have had of gaining the inestimable affection of Arthur Beresford?

As it was, Arthur and he, notwithstanding a disparity in their ages of eight years or so, struck up a mutual friendship at once and many a half-crown tip found its way out of Arthur's pocket into Jack's, in consequence. Jack used to be treated to the pit of Drury Lane as often, almost, as the rules of Newgate Street would permit, and the Crystal Palace saw him and his yellow-stockings at Sydenham on many a Saturday afternoon.

"My friend Beresford," was pretty well known in the quadrangle of Christ Church Hospital, I think; and more than one bareheaded youngster wished that he had a friend Beresford of his own. But then, you see, every boy may wear a blue gown, and yet cannot possess a sister Maud. Happy was Arthur when he could cunningly lead Jack to converse about his sister. But Jack did not particularly care to talk about that lady. He would sometimes mention her and her doings in a prosaic sort of way, but it never troubled Jack much what such uninteresting beings as girls and women might do, nor did it, that anybody else with a properly balanced mind would be interested in such things. Cricket, now, if you please, and who was the captain of the Harrow Eleven, or the best batsman that Eton possessed; who were the stroke and bow of Cambridge, and the coxswain and No. 3 of the Oxford crew; who was likely to be Grecian at Christ Church,—on such subjects as these he could and would chatter till poor Arthur's head ached; but girls, and knitting and crochet, none of that stuff for Jack, if he could help it. I don't believe Jack half appreciated the advantages he possessed, or many a half-crown tip might have grown to a five shilling one.

One precious advantage to Arthur Beresford, however, was the issue of his devotion to Jack. Jack invited his friend to spend a week of his holidays down at Hamley, where was situated Jack's home.

"You get a week's leave at Midsummer, Beresford," said

youth in yellow stockings, as he munched an apple which Arthur had bought for him, "I shall have my holidays at Midsummer, you know. There are some proper fellows in the Hamley Cricket Club, and it will be jolly—won't it?"

Arthur had no hesitation in saying that it would be jolly, and that he would be delighted to spend a week in the country with his dear young friend, who must also come and spend a week with him, at Oakhurst, and hear the glorious yarns of sea-adventure, with which, doubtless, the captain would regale him.

"Most likely you'll meet Sir Jasper Estcourt, if you come to my home," said Jack, wiping his mouth, as the last portion of apple disappeared. "I don't know what sort of a fellow he is; and whether he goes in for cricket and that sort of thing; but I hear he is going to come to our house, you know, on a visit."

"Oh, indeed!" said Arthur, already not feeling well disposed towards the knight or baronet, whichever he might be. "Who is Sir Jasper Estcourt?"

"Haven't I told you? He's the fellow who is going to marry my sister."

"To marry your sister?"

"My sister, Maud. You've seen my sister Maud, haven't you, Beresford?"

Beresford, with a sinking heart, replied that he had seen her. The visit to Hamley had lost its charm; and he almost came to the conclusion, then and there, that Hamley or Maud should never see him.

This Damon and Pythias had been on one of their excursions, and were now leisurely walking back towards Newgate Street. After receiving this unexpected blow, Arthur Beresford walked along in silence, abstractedly staring at his toes.

"Did you say that your sister had never seen this gentleman?" he demanded, steadying his voice as best he could.

"Not that I know of—at least not since she's been grown up. I've never seen him."

"But, Jack, does it not seem wrong that a girl should marry a man she has never seen? I suppose it must be this fellow's title—though I should not have believed your sister was ambitious. She cannot love him—how can she?—if she has never seen him."

"It does seem rather queer, doesn't it, Beresford? But there's a will or something; and if Maud doesn't marry Sir Jasper, you know, the money goes to somebody else—that's how it is."

"Should you, Jack, like to marry a lady whom you had never seen, for the sake of her fortune?" said Arthur, with assumed playfulness.

"Blest if I knows!" answered Jack, cogitatively. "Don't think I should—it would be awfully jolly, though, to have a lot of money,—wouldn't it? *I* don't want to get married; I don't care about girls,—they're such puling things; they cant play at anything a fellow cares about; and if you just hit 'em on the head they begin to cry! Bah!"

Happy youth! O Jack! thy Phythias almost envied thee thy heart's freedom! He was in torture; such torture, sleep scarcely visited his heavy pillow that night. Nevertheless, before morning he had resolved that his projected visit to Hamley should still be paid. Why should he tamely submit to the will of a noodle of a baronet, and that baronet an old one? Why should he stand by, while a hope remained to him, and calmly see a saint-like maid sacrificed to an old sinner like Sir Joseph? That Sir Joseph was an old sinner Arthur had no doubt whatever, though how he arrived at that conclusion he would have been puzzled to say.

Sir Joseph and his affairs were frequently mentioned after the conversation recorded above. Arthur would have been glad to have learned the details of the alleged testamentary decrees which bound Maud to marry the baronet; but Jack was utterly unable to supply any definite information as to these particulars.

Arthur Beresford was aware that Mr. Baxter might have told him a good deal of these matters, but the young fellow, very naturally, had neither effrontery nor inclination to ask them. For here it may be observed that, although Mr. Baxter, since his official connection with the Livery Company, had practically relinquished private practice, he still kept chambers and an old clerk at Lincoln's Inn, and continued the legal adviser of a special few, who were both clients and personal friends, and amongst these might be enumerated Dr. Lee and the Lindens.

Before, however, the projected visit to Hamley was made, Arthur had learned from the lips of Mr. Baxter much that he wanted to know; and as is frequently the case, much which, having learned, he heartily wished he did not know. The statement was a voluntary one on the part of Mr. Baxter, and how it came to be made the young man never knew; but we, who, in regard to this history, are supposed to know everything, can probably form a shrewd suspicion that the worthy lawyer made it as a warning to the young fellow, to abandon any romantic ideas in regard to Maud Linden.

One morning, in the latter part of spring, and after Arthur had obtained leave from the Court of Assistants to take his holidays in the course of the ensuing month, Mr. Baxter had occasion to go into the outer office for some document or account-book which was in the possession of Beresford. That young man happened to be

absent from the room at the time, and so Mr. Baxter went over to his junior's desk to try and find the article he required. Sure enough it was ready to hand, just inside the desk, which had been left unlocked, and there also, on a sheet of letter papers, was a head, roughly sketched in pen and ink, which certainly bore some resemblance to Maud Linden, but which Mr. Baxter would not have identified as her portrait had not Arthur Beresford written her name a dozen times around it.

Mr. Baxter took this sketch in his hand, inspected it for a moment, and then, with a good-humoured smile and a shake of the head, replaced it as he had found it, returning with the account-book to his own *sanctum sanctorum*. He had guessed the state of his young friend's heart, and believing a few words of admonition, or at least of warning, were needful, he resolved that they should be given, though their recipient should be unaware that they were anything more than casual remarks, without special significance to himself.

Accordingly, one afternoon, just before the holiday had arrived, Mr. Baxter was giving some directions as to a draft lease of some of the Company's property on their Moorfields estate.

"By the bye, Beresford, you will be away before next Thursday," he said.

"The day after to-morrow, sir, my leave begins."

"True. Let's see, you have a month, haven't you? Well, I hope you'll enjoy the change. I think you told me you were going to spend part of the time at Hamley?"

"About a fortnight, I believe," answered Arthur, with an uncomfortable feeling of heat in the face. "Jack Linden, the youth at the Bluecoat-school and I have become capital friends, somehow; and, in fact, Mrs. Linden has invited me to spend a part of my holidays there while Jack is having his vacation."

"You'll find them very nice people, I have no doubt," Mr. Baxter replied. "I have known them for some years. Mr. Linden is an invalid and very old. I don't suppose you will see much of him, but Mrs. Linden is a very nice woman, and you'll like her. Tom is at Edinburgh, studying medicine, so I don't expect you will see him at all; and Maud, you know; you've seen her at her uncle's—I believe? A very nice girl is Maud."

"A charming girl, sir, I think," returned the other, more enthusiasm manifesting itself than perhaps he was aware of.

"So she is, Beresford—a very charming girl—a girl that is sure to have many admirers. If I was twenty years younger and hadn't a wife, I dare say I should be in love with her myself; but it is no use for any of them, Beresford—she is already, to all intents and purposes, betrothed."

Then Mr. Baxter became very busy turning over his documents and papers, in order that he might not unnecessarily confuse his young friend by looking at his face.

Arthur's presence of mind, however, had not forsaken him quite.

"To Sir Jasper Estcourt, sir, you mean?" he remarked, quietly.

"Yes; you have heard of the arrangement, then, it appears?" said the lawyer, looking surprised.

"Not of any precise arrangement. I have heard from Jack that he believed Miss Lindon was engaged to Sir Jasper, whom, however, she had never seen; and that some mysterious monetary reasons were at the bottom of the projected marriage."

"Just so. It is a very romantic affair, and as it is no secret, I may as well tell you how it arises. It appears, that Maud Linden and Sir Jasper are first cousins—Maud's mother being a younger sister of Sir Jasper's mother, and these two ladies had an elder sister, who was wealthy, eccentric, and unmarried. With this old lady, Jane Woodford by name, Maud was an especial favourite; the baronet, to whom she had once shown a preference, being apparently in disgrace on account of the wild and reckless life he had led from his youth upwards. The general opinion then was that Maud would inherit the whole of the aunt's property, amounting to about forty thousand pounds, for Miss Woodford would often stroke the girl's hair, and tell her that she should be a lady and keep her own carriage some day, and generally showing her especial affection. These assurances on the aunt's part seem to have had a latent meaning scarcely suspected at the time—whether the old lady had an ambition that Maud should really become a lady of title, or whether there was still a lurking fondness for her scapegrace nephew, and that she thought a marriage with a pretty and virtuous girl, like Maud, would be the means of reformation to the middle-aged scamp.

"What an infernal scheme!" ejaculated Arthur, stamping his foot angrily.

So it was—at least, it was scarcely a fair proceeding towards the girl," Mr. Baxter continued. "However, this may have been, when the old lady died, some three or four years since, she left a somewhat singular will, in which, after making several important bequests, she declared her desire that her property and the baronetcy in the family—of which being of obscure parentage herself she was always proud—should go together. She therefore bequeathed the bulk of her fortune to her niece, Maud Linden, on condition that she should marry her cousin, Sir Jasper, on or before her twenty-first birthday, providing the gentleman should be willing to carry out such arrangement. Should he not do so

by the time Maud came of age, the property was to be hers absolutely. Should they marry, the whole of the money, except about ten thousand pounds, of which Sir Jasper would acquire control, was to be settled on Maud and her issue. On the other hand, should the baronet be willing to fulfil his part of the arrangement, and Maud decline the honour of his hand—in this case Miss Woodford would mark her displeasure and indignation by cutting her niece off with one shilling of the coinage of the realm only. And under these circumstances Sir Jasper would suffer also, for he would not only lose his bride, but he would have to content himself with a legacy of five thousand pounds, which sum the testatrix—expressing her belief that if her dear nephew did not marry and settle down, he would certainly go to the devil with all speed—declared that was quite sufficient of her money to help him on the way. The remainder of her property would then be applied to the formation of a missionary society for the conversion of the South Africans and the colonists of the Cape.

"An infamous old wretch!" ejaculated Arthur fiercely between his teeth.

"Perhaps she was," returned his friend with a grim smile. "At all events, we must admit that if her scheme for this unholy marriage fails, she has done her best for the spiritual preservation of African souls."

"There is no chance of that," Arthur replied, unable to conceal his anger. "The old beldame has taken good care that her wicked desires will be carried out. She has made it, above all things, the interest of this baronet, the used-up old roué, to marry the poor girl, and she, angel as she is, cannot be expected to choose beggary when wealth and a title are offered her on the one hand, and beggary on the other."

"It is scarcely likely she should do so, for her father is a permanent invalid and her family are comparatively poor. And so, my dear boy," added the lawyer with a kind smile, "as you are going amongst them, I have deemed it right to acquaint you with these facts, in order that, as Maud is a very charming girl, you may not be guilty of the imprudence of losing your heart."

Arthur blushed deeply.

"Thank you, Mr. Baxter," he replied with a bitter laugh, "I will not fail to remember that it is my duty to avoid falling in love with a girl who is betrothed to a baronet, even though she has never seen him."

"And remember, my dear boy, also, that if it is your duty not to fall in love with her, it is still more so to guard against doing anything which may cause her to fall in love with you."

"Now, that, sir, is more than I can promise," returned the young fellow, in the same bitter, mocking tone. "I am so handsome, you see, that the young lady is sure to do that. Shall I cut off my nose, or gouge out my eyes——"

"No, my dear boy," interrupted the other smiling, "your tongue is what I fear the most. Keep that silent, and when you come back, I hope I may have some news to tell on a subject you have much at heart. I have not been idle, and I think I am on the eve of hearing somewhat of your heritage."

CHAPTER X.

AN EXPEDITION TO THE EAST.

THE gentleman who sat daily from ten till six o'clock in Mr. Baxter's chambers, in Lincoln's Inn, was well known to that gentleman's clients as Mr. Styles; and it was a fact, understood and recognised by all, that though Mr. Styles might not be much of a lawyer, whatever was professionally entrusted to him was as though it had been communicated to his principal himself. Many persons supposed that the chubby-faced little gentleman in spectacles was Mr. Baxter, and addressed him by that name; in which case Mr. Styles would mildly close his eyes and smile, well pleased at the error which he was unwilling to contradict. To the well-informed, however, he was Mr. Styles, and Mr. Baxter's confidential man, who for thirty-five shillings a week had faithfully served his master for nearly as many years: in which capacity he was equally respected and liked: respected because he was known to be thoroughly faithful and honest, and liked because he was kindly and obliging; who would by no means object to accept a glass of ale if a good-natured client invited him; would fetch and carry for anyone who asked him civilly, and maybe used a little adroit flattery in the asking; and would be generally much imposed upon, as such good-natured, harmless creatures often are.

The very night upon which Arthur Beresford journeyed, in company with his yellow-stockinged friend Jack Linden, to Hamley, Mr. Styles was employed upon a confidential mission in the object of which our hero was deeply concerned.

When Mr. Baxter had assured Beresford that he had not been idle in his interests, he spoke the truth; and I have no doubt that Mr. Styles had not been idle either. The present expedition of the latter gentleman was the result of certain inquiries and advertisements, which led him to anticipate that he was at length on the eve of a discovery, and which involved a journey to the far—far East End.

On the afternoon in question, then, Mr. Styles left his office somewhat before his usual time; and having refreshed himself at a modest coffee-house near Chancery Lane, set out on his expedition on foot. On foot! for though the journey was a long one, and, doubtless, Mr. Styles would charge his 'bus-fare to the office accounts, gentlemen, with five-and-thirty shilling incomes must be economical, and turn a few pence honestly when they can.

It was a hot, close afternoon, or rather evening, in June, and the busy streets were crowded and dusty, as the little man trotted along Fleet Street, past St. Paul's, Cheapside; not stopping by the Bank, but pressing on along Leadenhall Street, and Aldgate, till he arrived at Whitechapel Church.

Here he paused a moment, looked about him, and having satisfied himself that his bearings were correct, trotted across the road, down some streets to the right; and by-and-bye found himself in the Commercial Road, which—in conjunction with the East India Road, as everyone who has traversed them find—is simply endless.

Still further to the East and further to the right, towards the river side, amongst narrow streets in which barrel-organs played and dirty children and dirtier grown girls were dancing; in which little boys played peg-top and swore loud-sounding oaths in childish voices; in which other little boys essayed fruitlessly to fly their kites fruitlessly, because there is no kite-flying atmosphere in Ratcliffe, only thick, unwholesome air, laden with dirt and smelling of tar and beer; through foul-smelling courts, where unwashed, unkempt women stood at open doors, and quarrelled, and fought, and swore, into a street somewhat wider, but still where women and young girls, bonnetless and drunken, with foolish sailors captive and in tow, sang boisterous and obscene songs—in Ratcliffe Highway, in short.

Before a small public house at the corner of a street Mr. Styles came to a standstill. He was not well acquainted with the neighbourhood, but before he left the office he had found the number in the Highway of the "Three Jolly Sailors," and here it was he halted.

The place deserved its name; at the bar were sailors enough, and jolly enough—too jolly, poor fellows, in fact. In the tap-room were a crowd of shouting seamen, each anxious to see how quickly he could spend the wages he had just received, and the shrill voices of women anxious to help him. Were they singing or dancing? Mr. Styles did not know, but he saw three negro minstrels, whose banjo and tambourine contributed to swell the din.

Into the noisy throng Mr. Styles pushed his way, one of the sailors good-naturedly making room for the "gent" to pass, and

one of the women calling him "ducky," and asking him if he wasn't going to "treat them to something hot," which question Mr. Styles heeded not, nor the loud laughter and jokes which, he was quite conscious, were at his expense.

At the counter he searched in his pocket-book, out of which he selected a slip of note-paper. Referring to this he politely inquired of the barmaid if the landlord was at home, propitiating the somewhat stern damsel by requesting to be supplied with a glass of ale.

"The guv'nor will be here in a minute, sir—he's just gone into the tap-room, to stop that row," the barmaid courteously replied.

"Thank you, my dear; then I'll wait," returned Mr. Styles, ogling the lady; "and here's my love to you, dear."

To which compliment the lady laughed, told him to "get along," and proceeded to wipe her glasses and draw her beer for the company, not offended by the liberty in the least.

Soon the landlord returned to the bar, a powerful, thick-set man, looking rather hot and savage, doubtless from his late exertions to quell the too boistrous hilarity of his customers. The barmaid said something to him, and then, wiping his big hands on his apron, advanced to Mr. Styles.

"You were wishing to speak to me, sir?" he said, politely. His voice was husky, but his face having now lost its angry look, was round and frank and rosy, like the sailors who were dancing in the next room.

"Mr. Windlass, I believe," said Mr. Styles, bowing.

"Jack Windlass, sir, at your service," was the reply.

"Some years ago, Mr. Windlass, you were an officer on board the barque, 'Sprite,' which traded between London and the Cape of Good Hope?"

"Quite right, sir; I was second mate."

"You doubtless, then, remember your comrade, Mr. Beresford?"

"Jack Beresford? Egad! I think I do, rather!" replied Mr. Windlass, slapping his thigh in ecstasy at the mention of his ancient comrade's name.

Then Mr. Styles adverted to the scene, in which the two sailors suddenly found themselves unexpectedly in the possession of a baby, of which baby Mr. Beresford subsequently purchased his comrade's share, and very astonished was Jack Windlass at learning that this baby was now a grown-up man; though, seeing that three and twenty years had passed away, it would have been more surprising perhaps if it had remained a baby still.

Remember it all? Egad, he should think he did, and Mr. Styles

was to make no blooming error about that. Mr. Windlass would like to have a yarn with Tom Beresford, for all that. Yes, of course, he could tell him the name of the young woman who shuffled the youngster on them; it was Susan Jones, and how he came to know Susan Jones was that both he and Susan were born in Sheerness. There might have been a little bit of "smitation" between him and Susan once. He didn't say there was, and he didn't say there wasn't; perhaps they *did* "keep company" for a little time; but then Sue went to service and he went to sea, and so they did not see any more of each other for years—not, in fact, till he met her down at the East-end, and then she availed herself of their former acquaintanceship to supply him and Tom Beresford, as the gent knew, with that there baby. Seen her since? bless you, yes. Sue was married and had a good strapping wench of a girl for her daughter, when he saw her last, some three or four years ago. She was living in these parts; Mr. Windlass could tell the gent the address, but had quite forgot the name of the party who had become her good man; and, in fact, Mr. Windlass didn't know that he could tell the gentleman any more, though he would be glad to do so if he could, for Tom Beresford's sake

Noting in his pocket-book the address of the whilom Susan Jones, and thanking his obliging informant, Mr. Styles, quitted the "Three Jolly Sailors;" and now turning to the left, bent his steps northwards, crossing the Commercial Road, and at length emerged into a series of small squares and streets which lie off the Whitechapel Road.

The street of which he was in quest appeared to be a long one, stretching, in fact, from the Commercial to the Mile-End Roads. The houses were all small ones, having but three windows—one by the door and two on the first and only floor; and in most of these parlour windows was either a wire-blind, a book of fashions, a bird-cage, or a nettle-plant.

At the door of one of these lowly habitations, Mr. Styles halted and knocked. A young lady in curl-papers answered the summons; and to her Mr. Styles made known the object of his visit as best he could; though even he, adroit as he was, found this difficult, as he did not know the name of the lady, her husband, or daughter, of whom he was in search.

"Well, sir, I'm sure it can't be here," the young lady in curl-papers had replied, when he had finished his tale; "because there's only mother and me and the lodger upstairs, who live in the house; and the lodger is a gentleman who is a cripple, who has never been married at all; and father has been dead these six years. But if you'll step into the passage I'll call mother—perhaps she may know."

So "mother" was called, whereupon poor Mr. Styles had to recapitulate his story afresh. The elder lady shook her head and didn't know, she was sure, and then the younger one appeared to be struck with a sudden thought. An animated contest between the two ladies then ensued; which Mr. Styles could not comprehend, for they talked so rapidly, and contradicted each other so much, that it sounded to him in this wise. "La, mother! don't you remember,"—"No, my dear, she died,"—"No, I'm positive he died, and not she; and she had a daughter, don't you know?"—"Dear me, yes, Louisa; so it was."

The ladies came to an agreement at last, and then Mr. Styles learnt the following facts. There was, indeed, an elderly lady whose good man followed the sea, who had a daughter, who had lived in that house before his informants came, four years previously, and who in every respect seemed to answer the descriptions of the persons he sought. But the good man had died, which was the cause of the ladies giving up the house; and they couldn't, if Mr. Styles were to kill them, remember the parties' names, nor yet mention any portion of the wide world to which they had gone.

Thus in his search to discover the female who could, of all human beings, most probably throw light on our hero's parentage, was Mr. Styles utterly foiled and frustrated. So, conscious of having accomplished all that mortal man could do; the little gentleman thanked the ladies, blew his nose, and trotted westward to his home.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FIRST EVENING AT HAMLEY.

WHILST these successful exertions were being made on our hero's behalf, that young gentleman, with his friend Jack Linden, were enjoying themselves, as best they might, at Hamley.

Hamley itself was a quaint and ancient little village, of which many may be found in Kent, possessing one street, which was appropriately though somewhat delusively denominated the "main street; delusively, because its name necessarily implied that there must be other streets which were *not* main streets, the truth being that with the exception of the main street proper Hamley possessed none else. There were a few "lanes" and "roads," it is true, but these either served for the purpose of locomotion to towns and villages more important than Hamley, or were merely the means of ingress and egress to some gentleman's estate, after which they were generally named.

The main street was also designated by the villagers, the London Road, or the Ashford Road, according to which branch of it was intended. In the main street were situated the brewery, the "Literary Institute," and the chapel for the Methodist New Connection, the church being half a mile down the Ashford Road, and from the village its thin tapering spire could be seen peeping through the trees, and its peal of bells heard pleasantly of a Sunday morning.

Midway between the village and the church was the cottage where the family of the Lindens resided. A neat little residence, built and designed by Mr. Linden himself, before he became an invalid. There was a portico with Ionic pillars and urns of blooming geraniums before the doorway, on the right-hand side of which, stretching right through to the grounds at the back, was the drawing-room, and on the left the dining-room and the library. A well-kept lawn stretched out in front, in which were beds of standard roses, geraniums, mignionette, and various sweet-smelling flowers, which made the air fragrant. These were cut off from the house by a wide carriage sweep, from the two rustic gates which gave admission from the road.

At the back was an extensive flower-garden, a shrubbery and a croquet-lawn, to reach which from the drawing-room you passed through a conservatory, where both Maud and her mamma spent no small portion of their time, tending the flowers and plants with which it was filled.

Jack was in the highest spirits at the prospect of going home for the holidays, and at the welcome which awaited him and his companion. Arthur Beresford was nervous; he felt as though he were treading on ground, off which it was his duty to keep his feet.

The welcome, however, that was given to him was fully all that he could expect or desire; Mrs. Linden met him in the hall, and assured him heartily, how glad she was to see him, that she might thank him for all the kindness which he had shown to her dear boy, Jack, who was never weary of extolling his friend Beresford, in the letters he wrote home. Nor had Mrs. Linden forgotten the debt of gratitude that she and all hers owed to Mr. Beresford for his noble and heroic conduct in risking his life for the safety of their dear Maud. Forgotten? No; nor could they ever forget that debt, as she declared, with the tears in her eyes, as long as they might live. At which assurances Arthur Beresford was mightily pleased, though somewhat covered with confusion, as, indeed, he was at all times, at the notion that Maud Linden was under any obligation to him. No doubt he stammered out some pretty sentences proper for the occasion, but he was glad when all these personalities were done.

His hat was soon hung up in the hall, and his small portmanteau, along with Jack's school-box, conveyed up stairs; and then, when he was conducted into the drawing-room, he began anxiously to wonder where Maud could be all this time, and why she did not join her greeting to her mamma's; without which, indeed, how unsatisfactory was the welcome! This would be accorded to him presently; for Maud was just then upstairs, most likely peeping into her looking-glass to ascertain that her hair was straight, or arranging some little matter which doubtless the feminine instinct can apprehend, previously to showing herself to her guest; and I suspect that if there was a smarter ribbon on her bosom or a special collar round her neck, it was in honour of the young gentleman to whom she owed so much gratitude.

Meanwhile, Arthur Beresford was entertained by his kind hostess and Jack.

Mrs. Linden was perhaps nearly sixty years of age, having married late in life a poor surgeon, who had struggled, she helping him, against the world till a fair practice and modest competence had come. Then with increasing work came broken health, and Mr. Linden was a confirmed invalid now, in his own room, waiting for death to come by-and-bye, but having the knowledge that his wife and family would be left but scantily provided for.

In all her troubles—and they had been more than her most friendly neighbours knew—Mrs. Linden had kept a cheerful heart. Even now, in her old age and spectacles, she had not forgotten her youth; and if needs be, that harp which stood in the corner, or the piano which was now called Maud's, could yield sweet music to her touch. Jack, her last born, was of course, his mother's favourite; though Mrs. Linden was proud of her oldest, who was now preparing at Edinburgh for his father's profession, and of her only girl, Maud, in whose life the elder one felt to live again those bright days of her own girlhood, ere she had become a wife.

"A lady friend of yours, Mr. Beresford, is staying at present with my daughter," Mrs. Linden said.

"Miss Baxter, madam, you mean?" suggested Arthur, remembering now for the first time that Mr. Baxter had told him he would meet his daughter, Bella, there.

"Yes, Miss Bella Baxter; they will be here directly, I suppose."

As she made the remark there was a rustling of dresses in the hall, and through the door came that sweet face which Arthur so loved to see; while the sparkling dark eyes of Bella shone out beyond. Maud's usually pale cheek was suffused with heightened colour as she extended to the young man her hand, making a pretty little speech of ten words or so, which she had doubtless carefully

prepared beforehand, as a proper one for a young lady to make welcoming a gentleman friend.

What Arthur said in reply signifies not. He blushed and stammered, and answered something. He, too, had prepared his little speech, but at the critical moment could not recollect a word of it. With the lively Bella Baxter compliments and light talk were easy enough. She could gossip and laugh, and find a theme of converse for all. A girl like Bella is a blessing to society at large.

"We're very pleased to see you, Mr. Beresford," that young lady, laughingly said; "and Maud and I have arranged that if you are ambitious to rescue any more young ladies from runaway steeds, whilst you remain at Hamley, we believe we can gratify your desires. We saw the ladies and the carriage this afternoon—did we not, Maud?"

"Bella, how can you be so absurd?" said Maud.

"Who are the ladies, my dear?" Mrs. Linden good humouredly inquired.

Maud answered her mamma something, and then both these ladies laughed.

"'Tis true," continued Bella, gravely; "that the ladies are not very young, nor could the pony, being somewhat ancient, run away with them very quickly, if he tried; but still——"

"Oh I know them!" interrupted Jack, hilariously; "they're the two ugly, fat old-maids, who wear big-green bonnets, and sit opposite to our pew at church. If their pony runs away with them, Beresford, don't you stop it, that's all."

"Now, I believe," said Mrs. Linden, graciously, "that if Mr. Beresford saw two ugly old ladies in distress, he would as readily help them as he would anybody else."

"Thank you, Mrs. Linden, for your good opinion," said Arthur, laughing. "I hope I should not withhold my hand; but I confess that when I have the happiness and privilege of manifesting my prowess that way, I prefer to aid youth and beauty, rather than age and plain looks."

"Then I will never venture to trust myself in a basket-chaise, Mr. Beresford, without having near me some knight more gallant than yourself!"

"If you take Maud with you, Mrs. Linden," said the incorrigible Bella, "no doubt Mr. Beresford will do his best in your behalf.

"Oh, Bella! if mamma takes your sister Clara, you know it will do just as well," said Maud, blushing a still deeper colour than before.

It is possible that at this juncture Mrs. Linden had an appre-

hension that she had not acted discreetly when she invited Mr. Beresford as a visitor to her house. Darting a by no means approving glance at Bella—for which that damsel cared not in the least—she asked Maud if she had looked in her father's room, to see how he was, before she came downstairs; and so turned the current of conversation into a less dangerous channel.

Now, Arthur Beresford, when he entered that house, had formed a steadfast resolution to act up to the admonition of Mr. Baxter. He would watch every word he uttered, so that Maud should not suspect the passsion that burned within his breast. Nay! he would utterly root up and destroy that passion now that he had learned that it was hopeless—he was fully determined as to that. Should he hang his harp on a willow tree? Was he a puling boy? No! he was a man, and would act a man's part. Nevertheless, a man's part is somewhat difficult ofttimes; and Arthur sighed for the freedom of heart enjoyed by Jack.

Influenced by these good resolutions, Arthur had demanded of himself, was it wise that he should enter that house at all? Inclination had answered,—Why not? Why should he not see Maud once more; now that the conviction was brought home to him that she could not possibly be his? When he had first learned to love that sweet, soft face, had he not the belief that he might do so without compunction? But now that this belief was destroyed—now that this too lovely girl was doomed to become the bride of that hateful baronet—would not disillusion come? When a certain fox perceived that the grapes were beyond his reach, did he, like a cowardly animal, turn tail, and flee from the luscious fruit? By no means; he looked at them calmly, till inclination vanished at the thought how sour they were!

By the time tea was over—that delightful meal at which Maud deftly presided, dispensing, with her soft white hands, the balmy cup that soothes, and, with her eyes, glances and smiles that intoxicate—Arthur was not quite convinced that the grapes were so very sour, try to think so how he would. By this time the young ladies had their bonnets on, and, my goodness! such captivating bonnets they were! and Arthur and Jack were escorting them for an evening ramble along the Ashford Road. Arthur Beresford's wise resolves were dispersed as thoroughly as I suspect would have been Reynard's philosophy, had a bunch of those dangling grapes fallen unexpectedly into his upturned muzzle.

When this interesting party of four emerged from the gates of Mr. Linden's house, the two ladies went first, Jack and Arthur following them, as Mrs. Linden knew, who was watching them through her spectacles and the drawing-room window. Soon convenience of conversation caused them to walk four abreast, the

ladies in the centre, and Jack and Arthur on either side, and by-and-bye, when the pathway narrowed, Jack paired off with Bella, and Arthur found himself with Maud.

Certainly nothing was spoken by Arthur or his fair companion that either Mrs. Linden or Sir Jasper could have objected to in the least; but if the latter was prone to jealousy, doubtless it was better for his own sake that he should not be there. Maud was quiet, almost reserved, as she walked by Arthur's side, her face downcast, and her voice very soft and low when she replied to his remarks. An unwonted tenderness seemed to express itself in Arthur's tones, as he, honest enough, painfully searched for topics of conversation that should not be *love*, the theme that struggled for utterance from his heart, but which he manfully kept from his lips.

We may surmise that they spoke of the beauties of the country around them; of the lark that warbled at a dizzy height above yon field of shooting barley; of the glorious golden sky where the sun was sinking behind the Kentish hills; of the ruined abbey, which was only a walking distance from home, where the ghosts of ancient monks were said still to visit on moonlight nights; of the romantic woods and scenery near Lord Rochester's park, where, before papa's illness, they used to pic-nic in the summer sometimes.

"Mamma has promised that we shall go there while you and Bella are here," said Maud. "We had a little pic-nic party there twice last year, whilst Clara Baxter was staying with us; but Bella has never been. It is a pretty place, and we always used to enjoy the outing immensely."

"So we shall now," replied Beresford, gaily. "I have been to the place once, but it is a year ago, with my Uncle Tom. It is very kind of your mamma to think of it."

"A gentleman is coming here in a day or two, Sir Jasper Estcourt. He is my cousin, though I have not seen him since I was quite a little girl; so that if he goes, and mamma and papa is well enough, which I fear is hardly likely, there will be quite a party of us."

"I have heard of Sir Jasper Estcourt, and that he would probably be coming here. Jack told me that," said Arthur, looking straight beforehand along the road. No longer did he anticipate much pleasure from that pic-nic which he had at first hailed with such delight.

Maud raised her eyes for a moment to his face, but drooped them again immediately. There was a flush upon her face at the mention of the name of her destined husband; on the contrary, when Arthur gained courage enough to look at her, it was almost ashy pale.

Sir Jasper was not referred to again by either of them. Indeed, it seemed a pity that he had been mentioned at all. Both felt embarrassed,—Arthur because he hated the name of the baronet, and Maud because she suspected, with a strange exultation in her heart, that he did so. Possibly she almost wished that Sir Jasper was not coming to claim her hand.

They had now turned homewards, for dusk was closing in, and the rooks had ceased their monotonous "cawing," and retired to the shelter of their respective trees. Arthur and Maud were strangely silent; the only sounds were their own footsteps, the rustle of the girl's dress, and the laughter of Bella Baxter and Jack, who were now following them some distance in the rear.

"Miss Baxter and Jack are merry," Arthur said, for the sake of saying something.

"They are quarrelling, I think," said Maud.

Quarrelling or not, they were in high hilarity, and Bella was boxing Jack on the ears. So they waited for these two gay ones to rejoin them.

"I have got the most impudent knight in the world," cried Bella, breathless.

"She is teasing me about my yellow legs," cried Jack, indignantly; "and I offered to lay her a shilling they are better legs than hers!"

"Did you ever hear such a proposal?" said Bella, tossing her head.

FEBRUARY.

You are the herald, as we think, of Spring,
  Proclaiming that her retinue is nigh;
That she, herself, has spread her balmy wing,
  And will be with us by-and-bye.

Then, tell us, why this sound that preludes her,
  This growling of the rampant days of war?
Do you precede some bloody harbinger
  Whose trump we long have heard afar?

Is it that with the season of sweet flowers,
  A demon comes, at enmity with good,
Who will baptise her bloom with fiery showers?
  And bathe her blossoms all in blood?

"Nay," but perhaps you answer, "you are wrong;
  "It is no demon blears the vernal sky,
But an avenging angel, just and strong,
  With scourge for Russian perfidy."

MATTHEW SETON.

HOURS IN SWEDEN.

BY LAUNCELOT CROSS.

PART VI.

SOLLEFTEÅ.

It was half-past eleven o'clock, on the morning of Tuesday, the 22nd August, when we got on board one of Skönvik's small steam yachts, and passed over to Nyland, where, in due time, we embarked on board the steamer, "Fanrik Stål," which runs between Hernosand and Sollefteå. Our party consisted of our host and hostess, the wiry, lively Trinculo, our host's lieutenant, Gloriana, and ourselves.

Nyland is a centre for the river-steamers. Large sea-going ones also come to it as a terminus; but the shallowness of the water prevent them going higher. It is about thirty miles from Hernösand. Sollefteå is thirty miles higher up than Nyland, and can only be reached by vessels of light draught.

The place is a mere cluster of red stores, with a bank and a telegraph office. It is surprising to see how many avocations are crowded together, whilst the wants of the village are so small. But, indeed, it contains the initials of the requirements of society for the higher and surrounding district. The few comfortable-looking houses, belonging to some of the men of commerce, are situated at half-a-mile to a mile's distance from the group of red buildings. Nyland, itself, may be said to be but a wooden quay, convenient for the interchange of passengers and goods; and it has a little island in front of it, made ugly by timber heaped all over it in a promiscuous manner.

We scarcely begin our river voyage before we come to a noticeable feature in the business of the Ongerman. Large booms filled with logs lie floating over many a rood. This is the work of a floating company, formed by the mill-owners of the river, for gathering the logs that come from the distant forest-reaches hundreds of miles away.

It is a very curious and suggestive sight—these log-migrations. As we gazed upon the pieces of wood—now floating down singly, now in couples—now in large companies, now hurrying forward, now resting on the shore,—the imagination saw in them types of fellow-beings on the stream of time. This was but a generality. The thought came still nearer home; and we felt it more pertinent to remark that the logs were the best representatives of the bulk of

tourists that it has been our fortune to meet with or hear of; of these sightless, soulless creatures, who drift through the loveliest and most eventful scenes, insensible to aught except their own sensual gratification—verily dull are they, as the dullest of these logs. We had scarcely put our thought into words, before Trinculo was as pert and tricksy with it as Queen Mab. For he is not wanting in the common conventional aptitude for taking another man's utterance as one's own—and that, too, before the speaker's breath is spent upon it. Oh, no! Trinculo lacks for nothing he has, and he at once made a prize of our illustration. *He* it was who perceived the tourists in their unities and companies. It was some satisfaction, however, that he went a little further and began to individualise them. As a log dashed against the stern of the steamer, dipped under it, rumbled along the keel and jarred upon the paddle-wheel, Trinculo, cried; "Gott im himmel! Here's Sven Surtur—dashes all round you—and under you—there he goes—scrunch. Does never reflect himself will be hurt—Oh, no, never! if he only makes you cry out. Yoo—oo—here's one other—something different—but something very like—very. That one is friend——knocks against your nose—rattles you about—only say 'you hit me hard'—and he will go on to knock his own brains out.——Ach! Tusen Djefvular! there's old—— Up he goes—and down he goes—on the wash of the steamer. Just in a big sensation—so big"—and Trinculo put out his hands as though he would touch both sides of the river—"So big—for Fanrik Stål moves without his permission. Look there—that big—bigger one—that is our *magnifique*——our Grand Turk. Doesn't he sail as if all Ongerman is his—no—as if he *is* the river—and not only he a log upon it? Phoo—phoo—but he shall be put right. He shall go to the sawmill—sure—sure—and he'll be put through the upright saws—and over the circular saws—and put into his proper dimensions—and put to lie quietly in the stacks, like all the other fellows—Eh, eh!—there are the small ones—they dance on the waters—they are the ladies—we know them for all. Ugh! And all these others, Förbannad pack!"—and here Trinculo turned round in contempt at all his log-pictures - the lay figures of humanity. "And not one of them can see—never did see—though they did look on everything, and say: 'Isn't that fine!' It was wood coming to wood—not one of them ever did see how beautiful the sky above—there the river down there—and all these mountains; they could not see how beautiful was one leetle tree—they only saw it was leetle." Our host listened to all this, and quietly answered, "Long live King Log!" little suspecting that he was speaking Grecian fable.

The forests are composed of pines and firs. In Swedish these

species of trees are known as *furu* and *gran*, in botany as *Pinus sylvestris* and *Pinus Abies*, in commerce as red wood and white wood. The cutting takes places in the fall of the year, when the sap has ceased to flow, and during the winter. After the cutting has been done, the trees are barked, and sawn into logs of certain sizes.

In mid-winter these logs are dragged over the snow, and placed on the ice of the river, or some of its feeders or supplying lakes. When winters' ice-chain is unloosed, and the waters flow, then the logs are borne forward in mixed masses out of the lake, through rivulets, over cataracts, whithersoever the swift waters hurry. Ownership is distinguished by certain marks cut into the wood, and there is no apprehension for their safety. Some little care is taken, but the chief reliance of many is on superstition. When the mark is put upon the log, it is considered "under the eye of God." We have heard the common impression rendered in the strongest language, such as, "Better kill a man than steal a log!"

The Floating Company has a large staff of men, who capture the logs when they have reached their station above Nyland. They are first gathered together, then separated in the booms already mentioned, according to their owners' marks upon them, and afterward towed in large rafts to their respective saw-mills, "Where," quoth Trinculo, "they become *sorted* again after they're sizes, and have now nothing more to do than to cry when the saws divide them."

Other parties of men are employed higher up the river, and in the northern and southern branches, into which the Ongerman becomes divided. The workmen loosen the logs that have become entangled in the many rocky rapids, and push those from the shore that have become stranded from the sudden fall of the water after the first floods.

These labours are going on as long as the river is flowing. On our voyage we were passed by thousands of logs hastening down, whilst thousands of others were lying on the shores waiting to be set adrift. The delay, however, in some cases is so great, through the logs being stopped and re-stopped on the passage, that on arrival at the mill they are found by certain marks to have been cut some years before.

At once, on leaving Nyland, we find the river assuming a new character. The great saw-mills cease—for vessels cannot come so high to load. The stream, also, becomes narrower, and is more easily embraced by the eye. It, also, winds more, and its reaches thus have often the appearance of lakes, which gladden the sight after the long and wide expanses of water lower down. On the shores and hills the birch becomes more frequent, and lightens the darkness of the pines and firs.

The stations we call at have a wild, bare appearance. There is one named Sanga, which is near a watering place; but we could not see the fashionable spot, as it lies behind a wood, at the foot of a hill a little distance from the river. People now pointed out the tall gloomy mountains of Paraberg and Smultra, which we were approaching, and fine momentary glimpses of glens and opening vales.

One in particular is prized upon the Ongerman.

"Now, look," cried Trinculo, "and when you look, see!"

For a long while the attention is drawn to the dark, tall, abruptly-shouldered Smultra, on the east side of the river. We pass it in admiration—gaze back to note how proudly it stands above all neighbouring hills, for Paraberg has been left miles behind, when, suddenly up a fine glen, we see into the bosom of the green mainland, backed by the long inland heights of the dark lordly mountain. "You see it; it is gone," exclaimed Trinculo. "And still some could see it for ever!"

It is only now that we behold anything approaching to the the size of mountains, and even these a Scotchman would not mention with his own; still, some of them are of imposing stature and massiveness; all other heights we saw in Sweden are mere hills or peaks. We have arrived at one of those positions (as proved by the towering rockiness) which led the Swedish writer, Förssell, to compare his country to a huge billow heaving gradually from the the east, and becoming petrified at the moment when it was about to break, presenting an abrupt and precipitous crest towards the west, as it descends into the Norwegian territory.

There is no harshness, however. The sable firs growing out of the rock—apparently so entirely out of the rock that Mary Wollstonecroft vowed that the trees got subsistence from the air—these hardy, ever-prevailing firs break the sky-line in all directions.

Considering how nature works on and into the soul, we are not surprised at those who are life-locked in such regions having an intuitive or inherited love for the firs. Fredika Bremer said:—"There is a Finnish proverb which speaks to my soul—

> "Listen to the fir-trees rustling,
> At whose root thy nest is made."

We are pledged until we enter the Eternal to the associations of our early years. Scott said he would die if he did not see the heather once a year. But shrub and forest fail when a grander object has been the familiar friend. The Arcadian damsel complained to Scott at Kelso, that the trees, of which she had suspected much, were lifeless, silent, and, compared with the grandeur of the ever-changing sea, even insipid; and she gladly got back to her ocean home, never more to leave it.

We stop at a small cluster of houses called SKEDAM, where the steamer had some cargo to discharge. The village is immediately below a rapid which sweeps round a small island in the river. The "Fanrik Stål," as soon as she was relieved of her freight, slowly steamed up the rapid, turned a sharp corner, fired a gun—in a few minutes we touched the eastern shore and were at Solleftea.

On another occasion, we left our steamer discharging at Skedam, walked up the river side, and crossed to Solleftea by a ferry. This, we found, afforded the finest view in the whole neighbourhood. Over the rapids, on the opposite side of the river, rose high, white, sandy cliffs; below the rapids, the river was smooth, with wooded banks on one side, open pasture lands on our own; Smultra, magnificently stern, frowning over the village of Skedam, closed the prospect.

The arrival of the steamer, as usual, is quite an event. Half of Solleftea turned out to see us, and be seen; and many of the gentlemen (as at Hernösand and other places) came into the *matsal*, or dining-saloon, to sup and have a brotherly glass.

Carriages—Trinculo will always pronounce them "carreeages"—were waiting for us. Ours was of the most modest description—with reins made of the first piece of rope that had come to hand. Sufficient, however, for our journey was the preparation. We ascended promptly, and along the road we dashed as grandly as though we had four-in-hand, and, we suspect, as much admired. The pace soon told. In about ten minutes we were at our hotel, which is a dependency of Skönvik.

Sollefteæ is the last important town before the forest regions are fairly reached. It is, therefore, the centre where congregate some three times a year the peasant proprietors of tracts of trees, to make sales to, or settlements with, the saw-mill owners. Skönvik's hotel is kept for the convenience of its managers in attending the fairs.

The situation of the village is very pleasing. It is composed of neat wooden houses—each standing apart. It is widely spread, and lies on gently rising ground along two parallel roads. Its large white church with detached belfry, is above the higher road, and is visible to all the country around, on either side of the river.

A little beyond our inn the Ongerman descends in long rapids between a lofty conical hill on the Solleftea side called Boro, and a confronting wooded height called Remsele Nypa. These rapids effectually prevent any higher traffic by the steamers.

We could not get beds at our inn, but chambers were provided for us in its *annexe*, a house standing alone in an adjoining field. It was ornamented throughout with sprigs of fir and pine. The

Swedes spread the verdure of summer—from the threshold of the homes to the very grave. From our window we beheld the stony shore of the river, the strangely-shaped sentinel hills, Boro, and Remsele Nypa, the pine-clad highland running from the crest of the latter towards Skedam, the far-stretching rapids, and the wide, basin-shaped whirlpool which the river forms immediately beneath them.

The timber-producing character of Norrland is now everywhere evident. Legions of logs are continually descending the wild waters of the rapids, and legions more, bound together by the force of the water, ceaselessly circling the whirlpool below, until the Floating Company's workmen steer them into the lower current.

Large rafts of sawn wood, well braced together, frequently come down. But not all the art of oar and pole can counteract the force of the whirlpool. We noticed one in particular, which, by the labour of the men upon it, seemed to combat successfully the outer suction of the eddying water, and make for the lower current; but, no, as it touched the downward hurrying stream it swayed a little—one or two of the longest pieces of wood yielded to the whirlpool's attraction—just a little, like the first yielding to a sweet sin; but that was just a little too much; the whole body of the raft answered to the motion, and in a few minutes the mass of wood lay helplessly stranded on the shore far from the lower current, to await new labours on the morrow to get it forward.

We took an evening drive along the road that leads to the villages and forests, which lie upon the southern branch of the Ongerman, called Fay Elf.

As this road rises for some miles we obtained a good idea of the nature of the region. We first traversed the whole of Sollefteå to its northern extremity. It possesses two saw-mills, which cut small timber supplied by some of the peasant woodland proprietors. Sollefteå thus asserts in a humble way that, like the rest of the kingdom, it obtains its bread and wealth from the natural produce of the soil.

We observed with pleasure the relics of the Midsummer's-day decorations. Within doors there is, of course, a display of greenness, but outside, even in this long ice-locked territory, tokens of festivities are raised, and festivities are held to commemorate the return of the sun's golden reign. We saw the tall Maypoles still dressed in their leaves—now all faded—and marked a bower entirely constructed of birch-branches, under the first greenness of which the proprietary household, sheltered from the Midsummer heat, must have feasted in the spirit of the ancient fire-worshippers.

Small ice-houses, cool earth-cellars, are attached to most dwellings, indicating the forward care that all livers here must have for the seasons. Winter's fruit has to be hoarded to ame-

liorate the brief torrid heats of July and August. And in these fiery months preparation is not wanting in regard to skin garments and other matters for their almost Arctic winter.

When we entered the open country we found, as further down the river, a prevalence of birch-trees. They also begin to assume a larger growth. It is said that, according to the botanic law, when the pine is burned down to clear the land, the birch comes up in its place. The Swedish proverb says, unreservedly: "The birch follows the pine;" but we think the abundance here must be in some degree due to cultivation. Be that as it may, the birch is a delicious relief to the eye after long familiarity with the dark, angular pine; the frequent aspen especially—in the stillest air ever quivering, amidst a crowd of motionless trees vibrating through each leaf—gives a peculiar life and pleasure to every view.

Swedes having their attention so greatly drawn to trees, naturally have many legends respecting them. Trinculo, too, must have his version. As to the aspen, he said: "All the trees in Eden-garden went to pay homage to their Maker. Every one—every one—But the aspen came not! When God called, in bad temper, then came the aspen—trembling very much; and God never took the fear out of it; and it trembles till comes the day of judgment." The mythical explanation varies with the people and their humours. Highlanders aver that it trembles because the cross was made of wood; the French—no explanation at all, but an application—that women's tongues are made of it. To ourselves it always seems instinct with love, and

> "Ever trembles and pants with bliss
> In the garden, the field, or the wilderness."

The plentiful birch-tree Trinculo admired too much to associate with it any unpleasant legend. He looked out for one of the dwarf kind, and then snapped his fingers, as he pointed to a scrubby tree, crying: "You see that fellow—Phuish! A bad reputation. His great—great—grandfather was a big one. Much bigger than pretty silver-birch. But he gave himself to be the scourge for Christ. Wicked fellow: His son was short, dirty—phoo! miserable—went to live alone—like them all ever since—like that fellow." "Come, come," we cried to Trinculo, "no more slander. If you can't speak a good word for the graceful birch progeny, don't speak foully of some of the outcasts of its race for the sake of saying something" (for Trinculo is always striving to be saying something). "Remember the birch was revered through all Scandinavia. It had a prouder name than any tree in any clime; it was called 'the Help of Thor:' for it saved him when he could not save himself: a storm brewed by the Trolles would have swept

him back to original chaos, had he not seized, and clung to a birch-tree. So was it chaunted in the Sagas."

Our drive brought us to an elevation commanding a most extensive view of the woody tracts spread beneath us, and of the distant high-lands, brightened here and there by the yellow fields of scattered farms. Here, again, we are profoundly impressed by the cultivated spots on and amidst rocks, and islanded in forests, "hearsed about with dark woods," as Spenser would have sang. Man enters into contest with and conquers nature in her wildest —most inhospitable recesses. Only where everlasting snow and ice kill all vegetation, is he repelled. And yet what have we to say of Iceland! She has a noble story torelate in regard to life, freedom, and literature. Where man has a purpose to serve he is more tenacious in his foothold than the wiry grass or the air-breathing tree.

In returning we beheld the scene more completely. However, as we retraced this route on the morrow, we leave it for after-remarks. Late in the evening we curiously sought a dancing party in the principal hotel of the place. It was given as a sequel to a bazaar, in aid of the sufferers by the great fire that had taken place at Söderham.

Dancing is a passion with the Swedes. "They are ever ready for amusement, or charity," said Miss Howitt. We now demonstrated how readily they combine them. There was nothing new in the dancing. It was the same as in London or an English provincial town—as fashionable and as tame. Some ladies and gentlemen were good enough to go through a local dance for us, but there was neither fire nor grace in it; nothing of the national Sling Polska which we much desired to see. We did not regret leaving the merry-making, and seeking our bed, where we were soothed to sleep by the ceaseless murmurs of the Solleftea rapids.

The following morning brought a sweet day of English character: a sparkling air and a bright blue sky, flecked with silver clouds. At breakfast-time we soon found, by the many difficulties that beset our obtaining food, that we were far distant from hotelled cities and the busy haunts of culinary *entrepreneurs*. Sweden nearly lost her prestige for good cooking. One thing alone saved it—a fine beefsteak. Ah, it was a delicate morsel! But, then, it is notorious that beating will reduce any quality of flesh into tenderness—whether it be the flesh that is grass, or the flesh that feeds on it. Our host-friend—unfortunately for himself—saw a certain operation on the present occasion, as he looked into the kitchen to expedite our meal. He discreetly kept the matter to himself until later in the day, and allowed us to swallow and praise the pounded steak.

When he did eventually refer to it, in an ambiguous way, and in the hope of adding loathing to annoyance, Trinculo laughed —nay, laughed immoderately. He relished steaks all the more for such maulings. With him that was all right. The more the better. His imagination feasted on the gory process. To cook the meat afterwards was the superfluity and degradation. He preferred it, like all true Norrlanders, fresh from the clubbing— minced, peppered, and salted. Ugh! then you had a dish fit for the gods. One far excelling the dish of swine-flesh, from the perennial Sæprimer, on which the warriors dine daily in the Hall of Odin. "Oh!" he cried, ecstatically, "Only one thing is diviner," and he shut his eyes, put the forefinger and thumb of his right hand to his lips, and blew away a kiss to a luscious recollection. "If you, Madame Gloriana, had been here one two-weeks sooner, you should have had some of it. My horse had a baby which died, and, 'ugh! it was *deliceuse*—indeed it was!" Our host, we believe, uttered an inward malediction that his kitchen-discovery was savoury and customable beside the tastes of Trinculo.

After scaling the Boro, and surveying the fine prospects it commands, up and down the river, we set out at nine o'clock with our friends for Näsa Forss, situated on the Fax Elf, about a Swedish mile from Solleteå.

We went over the ground of the previous evening's drive, and shortly entered a wood. It was dense, and seemed to press tightly upon us. The odour of the firs was delightfully pungent, but after a while it became overpowering. Probably this was from being unaccustomed to it. However, we soon got through the trees, and found that we had had rather a foretaste than a literal experience of a forest.

Afterwards we came to a farm, reputed to be one of the finest in Norrland. Its owner is called "a king." Certainly it was the finest we saw in these parts, for, although hemmed in by the woods, and evidently wrested from their rightful domain by persevering toil, it was of larger extent and in a higher state of cultivation than any other, whilst the farmhouse and adjacent dwellings had the appearance of solid comfort.

Our host here left us, to go and fish up the river and join us at the Forss. We drove on for some distance. Reaching a lonely hut on the wayside, we dismounted; there was no accommodation for us in the hut—in fact, there was nothing in it but a pallet, and a loom at which a good-looking but care-worn woman was busy— so busy, that she seemed to consider it lost time to speak to us, or attend to her little dirty child, which wandered about the room and in and out of the door. Instantly the sad music of Tom Hood's verse ran through our mind—

"Work !—work !—work !
My labour never flags ;
And what are its wages ? A bed of straw,
A crust of bread—and rags."

But, no, these northern wilds are not a proper locality for the application of such bitter lines. In this assiduous worker we had the fact brought strongly before us, that in a true Swedish home nearly everything is "home made." We were probably witnessing one of the worst types; but even here, if there was eager diligence, continuous labour, that forbade many of the niceties that can enrich even a humble home, there was not the hunger-bitten cheek, not the squalor, nor the rags of the penury of cities—and in an instant the worker could have—

"The skies above her head,
And grass beneath her feet."

We left our carriage and wandered over the open ground to the Forss, which is our Ultima Thule, some seventy miles from the Bothnic main. We heard its thunders long before we reached it. Its sight was magnificent; the river from its high and smooth current, descended abruptly along a wild, craggy bed, spurting, foaming, roaring, and, ere it found rest again, immediately from its wrestling with the riven and scattered granite masses, it dashed down amidst still huger heaps of rocks which it appeared striving to overwhelm with its multitudinous waters, furious at its still course having been disturbed.

This mighty Forss is several hundreds of yards in extent, and presents every aspect of turbulent and descending water. Small rivulets, brightly running through tiny clefts, roaring torrents—gentle, glassy waterfalls, cauldrons of seething foam,—high-leaping waves besieging the obstinate, unyielding rocks, sweeping, irresistible water-bolts. It i sa scene of flashing, steaming, thundering waters, interspersed with quiet, crystal pools, all formed by the splintered, enormous crags which are scattered throughout, thwarting, diverting, delaying, inciting the river. Amidst the granite network are thousands of logs from the forests, one here, swimming softly upon a shaft of calm water, there interlocked with a hundred others and barricading the stream that has hurried them down yonder; thrown up by angry waves of a mighty fall,—projected like straws into the air, and falling heavily into the flood below. Finally, like the rest of the grave after the turbulence of life, all this commotion and thunderous noise subsides into the silence and calm of the river far beneath us, where we behold the Forss-tossed logs gliding toward their destination as softly as in a dream.

We spent some hours watching the labours of a gang of men

in the wildest gulfs of the Forss, loosening some hundreds of logs that jammed the channel down which they had come. "Sometimes," quoth Trinculo, "these stacks are builded up to a quantity of twenty—thirty thousand or more—and have to be exploded with dynamite."

After dining, we roamed about the rocky banks, over heather and amidst the plentiful cranberries which gleamed like rubies amidst their shining, low, green leaves. The fruits, as well as the rocky undulations, and ever-stretching pine and fir woods, the abounding cranberry, bilberry, and wild strawberry, give an un-English character to the scene.

There are traditions, too, peculiar to Scandinavia which pertain to such a spot. Amongst our own lakes we can perform nature's wildest rites as here, and give away our spirits to the mists and winds, the floods and cataracts. But in these North kingdoms lingers fairy lore, which importunately calls upon the mind, and shares the emotions we feel.

On the advent of Christianity, Odin, with all his scalds and minstrels deserted their temples, homes, and groves. They did not, however, "troop to the infernal jail;" they had performed a religious mission according to the times into which they were born; they met a milder doom than sullen Moloch, Isis, Orus, Arnubis, and Osiris. They made their dim abodes under the secret shelter of cascades. As you stand on this crag of ten millions of years, and listen to the mixed voices that come up from the Forss—the legend will tell you that your imagination does not err in deeming it music—but your natural sense is deceived in supposing it comes from the water—the legend says that it is the music which comes from the spirits of the old religion—from their harps and their hopeful songs of the day of their redemption, which draweth nigh.

These spirits are called Necks and Strömkarls. Many are the songs, more are the stories regarding them. They are popular beyond anything in history. You will see their names on the steam-gondolas of Stockholm. Our white water-lily is beloved by them: under its snowy petals it delights to nestle, and thus it has the name—Neck Rose. The tender feeling for them exists from the hut to the throne. Carl XV., in his "Autumn Farewell to Drottningholm," sang,

> "Thou shore, reed garlanded, where softly stringing
> His harp at eve, the Necken charms the scene."

In returning we had a finer view of the lands around Sollefteå than on the previous evening, inasmuch as we were at a higher elevation on issuing from the forest. We saw the distant town scattered along the rising ground, high above its white church,

which must rejoice the hearts of the distant forest dwellers when coming to the fairs. The rural church is always a gladdening object. It bespeaks homes clustered near it, and hopes not bounded by our daily cares. There is a glimpse of heaven in its sight, though few discern the source of the inward joy when the eye hails it. Oh! how the forest-dwellers must thrill when they see from afar this divine beacon, which denotes the end of their journey, and typifies the desired end of their life-journey.

On the opposite side of the river were the interminable tracts of pines and firs, farms here and there illumining their darkness. Downwards, the prospect was suddenly closed by the sombre hills of Paraberg and Smultra.

Next day, Friday, the twenty-fifth of August, we left for our Skönvik home by the same steamer, the "Fanrik Stal." The morning was clear, the sun was shining brightly, but there was a singular coldness in the air—an eager, keen coldness. We should have breathed balm by the appearance of everything around; and balm it was, but it was iced. It made us understand at once what the winter must be, when the sun's force is gone and darkness is spread over eighteen out of the twenty-four hours. Far off the coming of winter was told.

SKÖNVIK.—THE WHITE HOUSE.

We became fairly settled at Skönvik for a month. Now, therefore, we have to speak more specially of its surroundings.

The large White House is, of course, the regal centre of the manufacturing colony. Situated, as we have said, on a bold, rocky knoll, two stories in height, of considerable length, with verandahs in front and rear, it is a goodly sample of Sweden's palaces, wherein her working princes reside.

The chief entrance is the one towards the river, but in reality that is the rear or west front of the edifice: it is the other side which contains the principal rooms, and in which our house-life was spent. In the middle of the building, on the ground floor, is the spacious dining-room, with a large verandah outside: above it is the dining-room, of equal size. After the peculiar custom of the country, one room leads into another. Thus our bed-room is entered from the north end of the dining-room, and accordingly, both rooms command the same view—a view in which are combined cultivation and wildness, the softest tints and the sternest ruggedness.

Speaking of the prospect as we sit at the dinner-table—our favourite position being opposite the glass doors which open into the verandah—we have the sharp framing of the prospect by the doors

broken outside by a young white-limbed birch on the right, and, on the left, by a drooping mountain-ash, heavily laden with large bunches of red berries. This latter tree was a sweet study in itself—slender, with branches full of graceful curves, and its profuse berries in beautiful contrast to its leaves, which were tinged a little by this encroaching autumn.

Around those trees lie the gardens; beyond, we see the fiord, like a lovely lake, a couple of miles in length—beds of rushes giving its margin an undulating, and, now and then, a peninsular appearance. Stretched along the shores are woods, and hills, and fields. In the distance, on the northern side of the fiord, is the village of Strinne, backed by its lofty, rugged grey granite hill. The view is closed by a pine-clad height, which rises above the end of the fiord, and has an open clearing in its bosom, which shows like a smouldering fire from the tall, wild, red flowers growing on it.

This is one of the finest of situations for a house. The natural changes of the seasons and the elements make its prospect ever varied. The hills stand out bright in the clear air, or take gigantic proportions through the mist, or show the play of the clouds, which now clothe them with garments of thunder, or again enwreathe their heads with the dim grandeurs of the rain-storm. The Fiord, too, responds to the subtle ethereal working of the elements; it is roused into turbid fretfulness by the hurricane, or winks in the sun under the kisses of the breeze, or calmly reflects the splendour of the heavens, the passing clouds, or flying bird.

Then as to the gardens—which are veritably hanging gardens. In former times, large sums of money were expended upon them, not so much to adorn, as to create them, to erect the earth terraces, to bring forth trees and flowers, herbs and fruits on the bosom of the barren rock. Later still, garden-loving tenants have exercised further industry upon the results of the labours of their predecessors, and made gravelled walks, planted arbours and rows of graceful shrubs; laid down lawns and cut flower-beds therein into various devices. The success has been complete. In these gardens are many things that strike us as singular in a clime over which a vigorous winter reigns for fully half the year. Here be Indian pinks and mignionette. The beds of petunias and asters have been as glorious, and more lasting than any we have observed in England: their rich, long-lingering and successive bloom will only be terminated by "the sword of winter sharp and keen." The stocks, too, are particularly large trussed, and load the air with fragrance. As for pansies, there are deep borders of them round the large cucular flower-beds; they have gone

through the winter and are stronger and larger and brighter for their endurance. Under glass we have cucumbers and melons; in the open air, vegetable marrows, hugest of things that are boiled. In the kitchen section we have homely radishes, lettuce, and (as nothing exceptional) boilings of green peas in the latter part of September.

Nor is this all. Wildness immediately neighbours on all this cultivation. Beneath the flower-beds to the north are the original rocky outworks, tending towards the quays on the Fiord. Up these declivities a climbing path has been carried; trees have been planted which now overshade the path, and plants are here which love the gloom—ferns, mosses, wild flowers that shine forth on the first motions of the spring, and amongst them the sweetest of Sweden's floral gems, the Linnæ Borealis. How musical is the name of that shy tiny wild-flower. Read the rhapsody of Sylvanus upon it in his "Rambles in Sweden," and learn to love it, as did the great man who gave his name to it. Of spring-flowers, at present, there are none in these shady places, but instead we have cranberries, which look like crimson buds, and on the open band higher up, in strange contrast, we have strawberries,—nay, even some of their belated blossoms, which shine like white stars.

Then, the broad surface of the rock between Flaggstång Berg and the White House has been deeply earthed and planted with trees which form a small grove. The birch is here—chief softener of the harsh grandeurs of Norrland scenery—and the rowan, or mountain ash, in abundance. Famous of old has been the graceful rowan—pagan priests made their wands of it, and still is it renowned for magical virtues; but it exercises its chief charm over us when on a calm day "its leaves shine forth a transparent gold, forming literally, with the sombre evergreen pines and firs, those golden and green woods which is the Swedish promise of unattainable good,"—it then instils feelings which seem breathed from purer spheres of existence.

Thus, although one from a southern clime will miss much, he will have a positive compensating gain in seeing so many unexpected garden friends, and observing spring, summer, and autumn in many instances blending their production, and the ruggedness of the lonely hills close shouldering the most exquisite cultivation.

There is much still more curious in connection with the residence. We hear no song birds, though our friends vouch that the woods are vocal in spring. Handsome magpies, however, are always flying about, and they have to be taken for more than they are worth in themselves; they have to represent the daily feathered favourites of our own home fields. We have not to esteem them

More precious than the lark,
Because their feathers are more beautiful,"

but because in Norrland we find them where we would look for larks, and they are as plentiful as are larks in our own island. In magpies, however, does not reside the curiousness we speak of. No, there is matter of higher import. We behold familiar birds and creatures. Our host brought with him from his native shores a cargo of living wonders; there were turkeys, ducks, swans, hens, peacocks, pigeons, doves, brilliant-plumaged cage-birds, and quadrupeds. These have their lodgings in the different out-houses, and their pleasure grounds are carefully fenced in or surrounded with nets.

This is not the case with the finest of all the foreigners—the donkey. He is allowed to roam at large on the road and in the woods. Nature's donkey is rare in Sweden; we believe it was hitherto unknown in Norrland. This Neddy is, therefore, much admired: allowed to possess many virtues not conceded to him in England, held in higher esteem than in the East. A dog-berry of those parts, would be proud if any one should "write me down an ass!" Trinculo vows he has a voice sweeter than a gold-finch or nightingale. When his bray goes up through the quiet day, and startles the echoes of the distant rocks, Trinculo—in the office which lies between the White House and Lockno wood, will drop his pen, and cry:—"There's music!" He is in greater raptures than if he had heard divine notes from the lips of a Titiens or Bettini,—and Trinculo knows not a little of music and the musical world.

Be sure the importation came not without the special astonishment of the Norrlanders. Far and near the praises of birds and animals were rung. Gefle marvelled when they were transhipped at that port. Stockholm's newspaper, "Aftonbladet," published a thrilling report thereon. The immediate district was stirred at the news of the strange arrivals; the people came in large numbers, so that provision had to be made for the ready inspection of the prodigies—nay, even Sunday excursions were proposed hither, but that did not fit with the ideas of our host as to the object of the day.

Besides their novelty there are daily incidents attending these alien birds and beasts which gives an air of adventure to them. A hawk one afternoon pounced down and plunged into a cage on the verandah, and did to death some gay-plumaged birds; and the plentiful magpies dauntlessly—nay, impudently—mount the back, of the peacocks and pluck out their feathers. But we must leave these trifling but enlivening matters and speak of

THE SAW-MILLS.

These must not be placed in a subsidiary light. Here, indeed, is the source of all Skönviks' life. We may say, also, here is one of the arteries of the national life, since half the value of exports from Sweden arises from timber—rough and sawn. About thirteen millions was the total value of exports in 1874, upwards of six millions of which came from timber. We have described the cutting of the logs; their adventurous voyage down the river: their sorting in the great booms of the Floating Company. We now see those which belong to Skönvik, lying in front of its mills, sorted into different sizes. The large timber saws are on the second story of the mills. An endless chain works along an incline from this upper chamber into the water beneath. At the foot of the incline boy labourers are stationed, fixing to the chain, log after log, as fast as they can be carried up. When the logs reach the upper chamber they are released by workmen, who place them on travelling frames, which carry them direct to the teeth of the huge upright saws. On the logs issuing from the saws, they have been cut into several pieces or slabs; these are instantly taken by quick mechanism to circular saws which transversely cut off the rugged edges, and transform the slabs into deals, battens, or boards, according to their dimensions. Immediately this is done, the deals, battens, and boards are placed on bogies, which stand ready on a branch line of the quay-railway which enters the mills, and they are conveyed to the distant stacks up the fiord, or down the river-way.

This is, in brief, the process of wood-sawing—the ceaseless operation which makes the Saw-Mills at once the magnet which draws the colony together, and the spirit that keeps their various intelligences in action, from the counting house to the remote labourers among the wood-stacks; the insatiable devourer of the myriads of logs from the far forests, and the unwearied supplier of bright sawnwood to the fleets of ships that come to Skönvik's wharves.

The Saw Mills form but one feature in the scene that we look on from Flaggstång Berg; but if we were to confine our attention to them alone, we should forget the natural beauties of the situation; we should become absorbed for hours in contemplating the triumphs of art and science as here exhibited: the power that comes from method and continuous perseverance: the air of romance that surrounds this particle of the world's business. The labourers do not belong to these districts. They are Finns. The greater number come with earliest spring across the gulf of Bothnia, and they go back when the swallows seek the sunny south.

The vessels bring strange histories and associations to this inland industry. What different nations their flags proclaim! And to obtain the cargoes, so calmly and so regularly loading, what storms, what perils of water and perils of rocks have they not braved! Then, as to the complex machinery, there appears something super-human in its unceasing, invariable workings. It seems like a Frankenstein—labouring with one purpose, ever receiving, ever giving forth; swallowing at one end the rugged timber; ejecting at the other the white, squared, sawn wood. It is, indeed, almost like a creator—at least, it has a suggestion of creativeness, from the roughest material, by marvellous, unerring means, producing more perfect forms. And so that vast saw-mill machinery—through these long weeks and months—works at its task—untiring, ever-producing.

"The pulses of its iron heart,
Go beating day and night."

GRÖNELUND.

ONE object fell within our ken from the heights of the Flaggstång Berg which we omitted to mention. It is a cottage that lies amidst a grove of birch-trees, between the White House and the quays on the river-side.

There is nothing remarkable in the appearance of this cottage—except that it promises snug comforts—nor is its name, Gröneland, singular, because from spring to winter it is really embosomed in greenery, and deserves the epithet of the Verdant Grove.

There is nothing, we say, that particularly strikes the eye in this cottage; yet it is necessary to complete the picture of Skönvik. It is a component part of the social and the working life of the place, the link between the presidential White House and the workmen's dwellings of caserns; between the governing power of the owners and the industry of the saw-mills—in a word, it is the dwelling of Trinculo.

Trinculo, the working lieutenant of Skönvik, is a naturalised Swede: a man who has seen the larger part of man's allotted time on earth; yet the sap of youth runs in him nimbly still, and gives him powers of application throughout his many duties. He is, withal, a man of many merry devices. Being a bachelor, he is more disposed and disposable than most persons for the varied calls upon his resources. He is, indeed, framed for despatch, and variety, being short, thin, and active. We should not err much if we re-christened him, Figaro. He is there, he is here. At one time or other he has been everywhere in the business. He has a versatile pen, which makes figures financial, and figures artistical, and figures off, occasionally, in grotesque literar humours. To one

of his dinners he brought his friends round him without invitation: no inconsiderable feat, as it means voyages in the summer, or sledge excursions in the winter, to get at him. His whimsical plan was as follows. He summoned one in the terrible language of a writ: called on another to share in a domestic drama, in which his part was indicated by the play-bill sent (in this case it was Herr Bayard, who was cast for "*Le chevalier sans peur et sans réproche*):" another was required to come to the public disposal of certain articles, which were enumerated *à la carte*: another had to attend the marriage between certain persons and objects, when the party might, as he choose, forbid the banns, or assist in the ceremony—and so forth.

Trinculo's language has the quaintness of a well-educated person, coquetting with a tongue to which he can never become allied. He places words in connection with subjects often strikingly apt, if considered in the light of a foreign idiom: often they go quite away; sometimes there is a remote hint of their relationship; most frequently a word has to be interpreted into another language, and finds its way back to mother-English as it best may. His converation is thus constantly a mosaic work of German, Swedish, French, Latin, and English—which enlivens the dullest of subjects—it is like putting the cap of a merry-andrew on the head of a grave monk. He can never get through any business without a surprise to himself and others. Some unexpected feature is sure to present itself to him, or he thinks it will astonish those that are by, and then he exclaims:—"Donner wetter! Paraphuè; Here we're in a category again. Tag mig fan! How fasten we this knot?"

One evening we went to Grönelund, to tea with Gloriana, our host, and the two gentleman of the counting-house. Trinculo, who amuses himself with diverse instruments—much after the same manner as Uncle Toby did with his plans, studies, and descriptions of the siege of Namur—took the opportunity of bringing forth his stores of melody, which he elicited from catgut, from metal, and from wood. We may say, that of the wood music there was a deal. His dog, too, gave solos of its own, in whines and barking, on being asked certain questions.

Our meal was *à la Swede*, with a smack of English elements. It was Trinculo throughout—of quaint incongruousness in efforts to please each and all.

Lovely in its situation: with an industry which need always be peaceful and profitable; a social life which might be as pleasant as it is full of interest—who would think that Skönvik has been a stage on which the seven deadly sins have played their separate parts, and every mean passion strutted and fretted for its hour.

Yet so has it been. But we leave reference to this phase of its existence for the time, when Trinculo himself opened his lips and poke on the subject.

MINOR EXCURSIONS.

Of these we had not many, but they were valuable in extending our acquaintance with the characteristics of the neighbourhood. On the first of September, in company with our host, we steamed to Kramfors, which lies in its own *Vik*, or bay, a little lower down than Skönvik, on the opposite side of the Ongerman.

Kramfors possesses two saw-mills, which are quite apart from each other. The production of the place is naturally very large—indeed, it is the largest on the river. The extent and arrangement of the establishment, therefore, became of personal interest to us.

There is one important matter in connexion with saw-mill to which we have not referred, and which is brought before the attention at Kramsfors in a singular manner. After the logs have been cut into deals, battens, and boards, the outside slabs that are left are very numerous and become a most serious incumbrance to the proprietors. They afford food for their most solemn deliberations from time to time.

The first use to which this "offal"—as the slabs come to be called—is put at every saw-mill is to lay it in the shores to form quays, which are thus made cheaply, and to the greatest extent. The quays, at Skönvik, as an instance, are upwards of a mile long, and all constructed of offal, right into deep water. But this economical adaptation has its limits. The offal comes forth unceasingly, like the salt out of the magic mill which gives the sea its savour; like the mice which came to eat up Bishop Hatto in his tower on the Rhine; like the locusts into the granary in the story-without-an-end—it supplies the material for interminable quays. Yet still forth, it comes in perennial superabundance, and the question is, What can be done to get it out of the way? It does not pay to ship it: a man would be a great benefactor to the saw-mills who would take a few score of cargoes away each year.

Now one of the economies of Kramfors is the extinction of its offal. Gangs of men are continually at work cutting such offal as is suitable into lengths of ten feet, and piling it into huge heaps in a particular manner. These heaps are covered up, set on fire, allowed to consume for several days, and are then opened out. In this way good charcoal is produced, which is used for smelting purposes. But even the system which comprises twenty-eight bulky mounds of wood continually burning does not conquer the offal of Kramfors. Therefore, in addition to quays and charcoal

heaps, they have an enormous fire, which they call a "hell," blazing day and night; or, rather, there are two "hells," one on either side of a high piece of brickwork, and according to the direction of the wind, one or other of them is in operation; for great carefulness must be exercised lest the wind command this fire too much, and drive the sparks over the stacks of timber. Along the top of the brickwork runs a line of railway, along which waggons laden with offal at the mills are continually coming, and casting it direct into the fearful fiery furnace.

Another of the economies of Kramfors is in its many prâms, of large keels, used by the mills in loading vessels, being fitted with high roofs,—a very useful provision for wet weather. Our observation of them was most *apropos*, as we afterwards found in an unseasonable hour when the kindness of Kramfors in lending some was greatly felt by Skönvik.

We were most cordially received by Kramfors' manager, his wife, and his brother. They led us round the farm, and the grounds attached to their commodious dwelling. Their garden was more to our English taste than we expected to find Norrland In a glass summer-house, situated in the midst of its greenery, we participated of true Swedish hospitality. In their grounds is an oak-tree: not a grand specimen in height or breadth, like those familiar to our English parks: nor stag-branched, century-defying, as those at Hardwick Hall—but an undeniable hardy oak, whose glory is that of being the only one in Norrland: which those only can dispute who know of another.

Kranfors, we should not forget to say, is not so insulate as Skönvik. It is in immediate connexions with the feelers thrown out from Sweden's populous centres. It is on the main-road to Hernösand—and Hernösand has sea and highway, wherewith to reach the southern towns.

Late in the day Kramfors' manager and his wife returned the visit we had made. It was a pleasant, neighbourly day, and, stimulated by its observations and sympathies, our host, Trinculo, and ourselves—when visitors had departed, and the household retired to their beds—held special converse until the long hour of midnight was overpast.

On the following afternoon we steamed about a mile up the east side of the river, passed the mill of Marieberg, and came to that of Kungsgården. These two saw-mills properly constitute a single establishment, as they belong to one firm; they are the two highest large saw-mills on the Ongerman; above them, as we have already explained, the water shallows.

Our purpose was to see one of the proprietors and the manager. In this we were disappointed, as they were both absent, and we thus lost an inspection of the mills.

Some things, however, could not but arrest our attention. A one of practical importance, there is here a large store or shed into which the river comes like a canal, and in it barges can be loaded with dry wood during the worst weather. As at Skönvik and Kramfors the whole house of the manager with its gardens is continuous to the quays and mills; but still more strikingly combining beauty with duty, we found the offices at a little distance from the house buried in a grove of birch-trees.

It was rather a summer bower than a place of business. All the hard ideas of hard words and its associations suffered a woodland change into something rich and strange. We were in the very faery land of official labours; and that, too, without any dreaming or flight of the imagination. Here was a green fact. We might have expected to find a Keats here. Between the drawing out of bills of lading he could sing hymns to the great god Pan and the wood nymphs: to relieve the monotony of penning specifications of cargoes, he could have slipped out—

> "Pulled the boughs aside,
> And looked into the forest wide,
> To catch a glimpse of fawns and dryades
> Coming with softest rustle through the trees."

We remarked what, at first sight, seemed an uncouth object amidst the softness and cultivation of the gardens of the White House. It was a pine-tree, which reared itself to an enormous height, lank and bare after the nature of its kind, except at the top, which is bushy.

We are told that the river is proud of it as a representative tree; therefore, it is allowed to stand. It is to this species of pine the runic lines refer, which are quoted on the Bältespännare, of which we have spoken. "As poor am I in friends as is the red pine of twigs."

The classic force of this figure is seen when you survey the species of tree—as here—apart from the forests. The illustration once spoken would never die out; born of nature it would sink into the heart—the solitary and the forlorn world everywhere see an emblem of their misery in this tree flourishing yet giving forth but a few branches—furthest from earth—nearest to the eternal. The affection of the King's Garden manager would annul the coldness of the ancient simile, and as Christianity moulded old legends and figures to its sweet purposes, he in his case breathe a gentler and humanising association over the tree.

At a little distance from the saw-mills we observed a lofty exposed rock. It stood high in the woods, overlooking the river and had a pole erected above it. In answer to our inquiries we were told that the manager's Namsdag (Name-Day) fell upon Midsummer's Day.

Here we touch on two of the most prominent observances in in Sweden.

First, the Name Day. Instead of his birthday the Swede honours the day of the apostle, saint, or martyr, whose Christian name he bears. Thus, a man born in November may, perhaps, celebrate his joy at being born upon earth in April. If a man should have no day allotted in the calendar, he takes All Saint's Day for his festivities.

Secondly, as to Midsummer's Day.

That day is held in highest reverence throughout all this land. Baked as Sweden's heart is with ice for so many months, when the great thaw does come it beats with throbs all the mightier and wilder for its late stillness. Nature and Sweden alike rejoice, like the unbound river on summer's return.

May is what the Swedes call the Flower Month; and on its first day they turn out, especially in the metropolis, to honour the return of summer. On that day, too, the Upsala students should give their great open-air musical festival; but winter, lingering, too often chills the bosom of that day. It is, therefore, most usual to allow the month to unroll its volume of life and flowers, and to combine the celebration of the birth of the year with its mature prime, on Midsummer's Day.

The festivities and fairs at that period have been ever famous, and are jealously attended to at this very hour by the very humblest of the land. No one neglects to adorn his house with fresh greenery. In Gottland religious rites are still celebrated on Midsummer's Day; the maypoles there adorn the interior of the church.

THE EVE—Midsummer's Eve, England's Eve of St. John, Sweden's Midsommer's Waka, is a time of sylvan frenzy. All emotions are at the highest pitch. Imagination brings her sorcery, wherewith to clothe the time, the gatherings, and the scenes. Frederika Bremer, in the most solemn of her novels, speaks in raptures, like like one in love, of that revered night; of "its magical light, the flowering meadows, its peace, its joy." Mysteries that relate to telling fortunes—charms as to marriages,—are practised during the nightly hours. Miss Howitt cries out in delight on the following day:—"Last night I slept in a sylvan bower; slept in a green wood all on a summer night."

Then, when THE DAY comes—

Midsummer's Day—the whole land bursts into singing. The same lady writes, "Jerusalem at the happy feast of Tabernacles could not have looked more festive than does Stockholm." A portion of the old religion has gone out of Sweden—celebration by fire. It exists still in Norway and Denmark, in the Wolmarfire.

But the fire of the soul burns as bright as ever, even in this far north." The honours of Balder, the Sun God, to which the day was dedicated, descended on St. John, the forerunner of Him who had to baptise "with the Holy Ghost and with fire." In Sweden the Maypole (Magstang) has taken the place of fire. It rears its tall form tricked out as luxuriantly as a thick foliaged tree, with which intermingle flowers and the feminine varieties of ribbons; and round it the purest of Christian and Pagan feelings are blended, of which the most expressive chorus might be the opening of Schiller's great Hymn to Joy:—

"Spark from the fire that gods have fed—
Joy—thou Elysian child divine,
Fire-drunk, our airy footsteps tread,
O Holy One! thy holy shrine.
Strong custom rends us from each other—
Thy magic all together brings;
And man in man but hails a brother
Wherever rest thy gentle wings."

Midsummer's Day is, therefore, a day of double rejoicing for King's Garden's manager and his family. The place is then always populous with visitors, friends, and strangers—for all are welcome on a Name Day—from the wealthiest proprietor to the humblest workman—and the maypole, which is erected on the rock, as we mentioned, is then a centre for games and dances.

Long may this be the case, and longer still, far into the golden ages yet to come, may these Midsummer merrymakings be held. In our heart of hearts we believe that they are full of blessings—that they truly come from a religious thought, a concealed spring—that they have their mission to refine as well as cheer the people One of Wordsworth's neighbours said to him, "I like to walk where I can hear the sound of a beck." The philosophic poet remarked to a friend that he could not but think that the man, without being conscious of it, had many devout feelings, and that the pleasures of his heart at that moment was an acceptable offering to the Divine Being. So would we say of this natural outburst on summer's return; it is a tribute to nature, yet not to nature alone, but to nature's God, and that although neither one nor the other is expressed in words. But, after all, what is verbal expression but a poor, limping thing in devotion or rapture? We see a very heaven of warm, unspeakable love in the breast of that chimney-sweep whom a lady overheard, in a garden in Stockholm, talking to a flower—(What a contrast! the chimney sweep and the flower! The flower has its gratefulness, unbosoming its loveliness to the sun, and the chimney-sweep has a heart that feels its loveliness); and he cries, "Well, thou art a beauty; that

thou art!" How much more is there not conveyed by this exclamation than appears in the mere words There was rapture and devotion in the chimney-sweep's breast,—an offering acceptable to the Divine Being; and as with him, so we believe it is with the national heart when it is moved, at Midsummer's prime, to shout, and dance, and make merry.

THE EMPTY HOUSE.

"NATURE abhors a vacuum," we are told by those who, having cultivated an acquaintance with Nature all their lives, may be supposed to know something about her tastes and habits. The so-called vacant spaces of this world, for instance, are all replete with myriad-formed existence, if one had but the gift to know it. "The desert shall blossom like the rose" to the discerning eye, while to the ignorant and unobservant it shall be a desert still, barren, empty and unprofitable. An empty house in a large city, in London, is, perhaps, one of the emptiest, most desolate, most forlorn of vacant places. In the country the "House to Let" is not long untenanted by man before it becomes a chosen spot for Nature's wild children to run riot in, and make a home of. The ivy, woodbine, clematis, and vine force their way through the doors and windows, and take possession of the interior, bringing with them whole colonies of creeping and flying things. Birds build their nests, and bees their cells, in the vacant rooms, the spider tribe tapestry the walls, rabbits and hares sit fearlessly in the neglected garden, and gambol like young children, on the threshold. In the midst of this tangible, visible life, the poet, with half-veiled eyes, shutting out the too-obtrusive, externa shows of things, gazes through the dusty dimness of the deserted mansion, and sees thick-coming shadows of the spiritual world;

> "And forms impalpable and unperceived
> Of others' sight familiar *are to his.*"

The late exquisite humourist, Thomas Hood, has written a poem, in a serious vein, called the "Haunted House," which expresses or suggest all that can be thought and felt on the subject of a deserted, human dwelling in the country. A celebrated French author of the present day has also described in prose, almost equal to Hood's verse, the aspect of a *maison déserte*, and the fantastic visions and speculations to which it gives rise in a mind accustomed to penetrate beneath the surface of things.

The Empty House in the country falls back again into the domain of Nature; she beautifies and adorns it, without destroying the associations of former days; they are sacred to the memory of humanity. She makes it picturesque, and thus enhancing the indestructible interest which man must ever feel in all places where man's presence has been, and passed away.

But the Empty House which we would introduce to our

readers was neither picturesque nor poetical; Nature could not take it to her embrace and cherish it into beauty; Time, the destroyer, defaced, without making it venerable; yet, despite of all external lets and hindrances, the said house became an object of attractive interest to us, and perhaps we may make it so to our readers.

On a certain quarter-day (some few years ago) a young married couple moved into furnished lodgings in a dull, shabby-genteel street, near Queen Square, Bloomsbury. This quarter of London has a peculiarly melancholy aspect. The streets are, in general, short, and lead nowhere. The houses are large and some what grand in appearance, but give the idea of struggling poverty, rather than of wealth. The poverty of fallen fortunes, not of idleness and dissipation, or of hereditary condition; the poverty that "cannot dig" and "is ashamed to beg." This sort of proud penury shrinks from keeping a shop, and, under the plea of having a house larger than it requires, lets apartments—at least, it does so in the locality of which I speak. Young Mr. Shepherd, or, as he was called by his intimates, Tom Shepherd, had lately married his dear Margaret, on the strength of a hundred and fifty pounds a year and the prospect of promotion in the banking-house of Golding, Dross, and Co. Tom thought that it was better to marry on a little, and live economically, than to wait for more; while Margaret thought that living with Tom on a crust in a garret was better for her, soul and body, than living as a resident governess in the most distinguished families. So when he had convinced her that they could afford it, she resigned her situation, and they married. Tom took furnished lodgings in H——— Street, Queen Square, for the first six months, that they might have time to look about them for a permanent abode; and after a wedding trip to Derbyshire, which lasted a fortnight, Tom brought his Margaret to her temporary house, about sunset on the quarter-day above alluded to. It was the 25th of March, about which time, we were informed at school, the sun rises and sets at six o'clock, and the days and nights are equal all over the world. Now about the rising and setting of the sun, Londoners can know nothing by actual observation, and therefore we are willing to believe that the sun *does* rise and set at six o'clock at that period of the year; but we do not hesitate to contradict the other operation; the days and nights are *not* equal all over the world, then, for in London the time of daylight is much shorter than the time of darkness, and at six o'clock on the evening in question, Tom Shepherd said it was quite dark, and they must have a lamp before Margaret could see her rooms. So he begged of her not to try to distinguish anything in them yet, but to walk to the window and look out there till the light came. Margaret did as he wished,

feeling quite sure she should like the rooms he had chosen. As she looked out through the window, she observed that the house immediately opposite was large and very gloomy, and that in two of the lower windows were papers, once white, and on which she felt sure the words "To Let" were printed. But the light came, and Tom showed her their *appartement*, which consisted of a sitting-room, bed-room, and dressing-room, all perfectly neat and comfortable; and Margaret was far too busy and too happy to think about the opposite house that evening. The next morning Tom was to return to business as usual. They had finished breakfast, and she was giving the crown of his hat one last turn with the little brush, when Tom, who was standing at the window, exclaimed:

"How unlucky!"

"What is unlucky?"

"Why, that our windows are all in the front, and face that empty house. It will give you the horrors to look at it all day."

Margaret laughed, and said that she should have something better to do with her time than to look at the opposite house all day

"That might be," Tom admitted. "But just come here, Meggy, and look at the place. Stand just here—so—and you can see the whole of the house. One, two, three, four stories high. One, two, three, four, five six, seven windows on a floor. What an enormous house for this part of the town! How dingy and desolate it looks! I suppose the rent is too high for the locality."

"It must have been to let for many years; it looks so dilapidated and neglected," said Margaret.

"Come away, dear," said her husband, drawing her from the window towards the fire. "If I was compelled to look at that gloomy, death-struck house for one hour every day, I should go melancholy mad in a month. I only wish I had noticed it when I first came here; we should never have engaged these rooms."

"Indeed! Then I am very glad you did not, for I do not think I should like any rooms in London better than these. They are so snug and cosy. Do not fancy that I shall suffer my spirits to be depressed by the aspect of the gloomy house opposite. We have a charm within this little home of ours, strong enough to turn that house into a gay palace."

"Do you think so, Maggy? That is right. It is on your account I regret it, for I am sure you must have grown very nervous and easily depressed, living among strangers, or shut up in a dull school-room with no one to speak to for so many hours. But now, dearest, run and put on your bonnet and walk part of the way to the bank with me. It is a fine morning, and you must take plenty

of exercise whenever you can, remember that, or I shall have you losing all your roses, and looking as cadaverous as the old house over the way."

When Margaret reached the end of H—— Street, on her way home after parting from her husband, she began to examine it in the broad daylight. It had been fashionable a century before. Sedan-chairs and powdered beaux, might once have been seen before every door. Huge extinguishers for flambeaux were still to be seen attached to the iron rails, flanking the door-steps of some of the houses. The windows were narrow, and in most cases dirty, adding to the dismal effect of the general colouring of the street; which was a blackish brown. The red of the bricks had quite disappeared beneath the hand of Time, and they had apparently never been re-pointed since the light of fashion had faded from them. Still, Mrs. Shepherd remarked, as she passed along, that every house on both sides bore about it some evidence of care, and the desire to keep up appearances. At one house she observed that the doorsteps and lower window-sills were very white; and that the small brass-plate on the door was a very mirror in brilliancy; its opposite neighbour's faded face was enlivened by rich crimson curtains, gracefully draped across the windows of the first-floor, which were as clear as crystal; strongly contrasting with the dingyness of those above and below. At one house she observed pots of flowers in a jardinière; at another, she saw a group of healthy-looking children playing with a cat in the window-seat; at another she saw a young girl tending a canary-bird in a new cage, while the sound of a piano proceeded from the same room. At last she came to a house dirtier than the rest. The area was choaked with rubbish; the railings were red with rust. The shutters of the windows on the ground-floor were closed, and most of the panes were broken; on the first-floor Margaret counted seven, long, narrow windows; and saw the time-stained papers inscribed *To Let*, placed in two of them; the shutters on this floor were also closed. She recognised the house immediately; but instead of crossing the road to knock at her own door, she lingered to examine this old mansion. It was larger, and had been grander than any of its neighbours; but it had long since been given over to decay. There had been no attempt to redeem it from its fate; it was utterly abandoned. As Margaret looked up at the grim, frowning front, she felt that there was a peculiar fascination for her about the ugly, old place. She was sure there must be some interesting story connected with it and its last occupants; a great sorrow, or, perhaps, a great crime; yes, there certainly was a curse upon the house. No ordinary dwelling to let, could look like that. As she was passing a second time along the front, she

was somewhat startled to see a little, old-woman, with a basket of fruit, sitting, or rather nestling, in the deep recess of the doorway, and half hidden by the shadow. Margaret stopped involuntarily, wondering how it was she had not seen her before; and, as she stopped, the old woman addressed her. "Any nice russetins to-day, ma'am? Real China oranges, ma'am?"—And coming forward, she held out her basket for Mrs. Shepherd's inspection. Margaret felt more curiosity concerning the vendor than concerning her merchandise. She might have been the presiding genius of the old house, her appearance was so much in keeping with it. She had the same air of fallen fortune; and the remains of symmetry and beauty in her face, were half-concealed by the effects of decay and dirt, and hopeless, melancholy neglect. There was a something gloomy and forbidding about the woman, as well as the house; yet her face touched Margaret's gentle heart, and she looked at her with pitying interest. The old woman fixed her eyes on the lady with a keen scrutiny, and suddenly turned them away, saying mechanically; "Any nice russetins, to-day, my lady? Fine china oranges, my lady?" Margaret spent a shilling in fruit; and requested the old woman to carry her basket across the road to her own door. She hesitated a moment, as if unwilling to leave her station; but when Margaret pointed to her residence, she said: "Oh! I don't mind going there; but, you see, ma'am, I am accustomed to this place, and if I were to leave it for long, somebody else might come and turn me out."

"I do not think you need fear that," said Margaret. "This is a very dull place, and I should imagine no one but yourself would think of selling fruit here."

"Dull? Ah, well! It may seem dull to strangers, but I am accustomed to it. Thank you, ma'am. Good morning, ma'am." And the old woman cast a hasty glance at the upper part of the empty house, and then returned to her former seat in the doorway, where she crouched down as before, so as to remain half-hidden by the shadow. Margaret could not divest herself of the idea that the old-woman was no ordinary fruit-seller; and asked the servant who opened the door, whether she knew anything about her.

All that Betty knew was that she had sold apples and oranges there ever since *she* had lived in the street; that all the neighbours' children bought fruit of her; that if you asked her any questions about herself, she was ready to snap your head off, like; and that missus said she was sure the old-woman had seen better days. She always came to that door opposite early in the morning, and went away at dark; no one knew where she lived or what was her name; she was always called "*the old lady.*" Betty added that no one could be got to live in that house, for it was desolate.

Margaret found plenty occupation that day in arranging her new home and unpacking her trunks; and she thought no more of the empty house, until Tom came back. While he was in his dressing-room, and their little dinner was being brought up, she went to the window for a moment to look into the street. We omitted to say, that Mr. and Mrs. Shepherd's rooms were on the second-floor of the house, and consequently faced the second-floor in the opposite house. As Mrs. Shepherd stood at the window, without any light in the room, she could see tolerably well through the outer gloom. After observing the old fruit-woman leave her station, and steal slowly down the street. Margaret raised her eyes to the window immediately opposite. Was it reality, or was it fancy? She thought she saw a figure, a female figure approach it for a moment or two, and then retire. She remembered having observed, in the morning, that the shutters of that window were not closed. As she stood pondering on the mystery (for Betty had assured her no one lived in the house to take care of it)—the lights were brought in, and Tom made his appearance in high spirits.

"What is the matter, Margaret? You look as though you had seen a ghost. Have you been looking at that desolate house opposite?"

Now, Margaret thought that Tom would think her very foolish if she told him what had just been passing in her mind; so she turned the conversation very quickly to another subject. After dinner Tom produced tickets for an oratorio, at Exeter Hall; and Margaret forgot everything but the anticipated pleasure, and the presence of her husband. During tea-time they got into a quarrel about the respective merits of Haydn and Spohr, and they agreed to finish it on the way to the Hall, as it was time for Margaret to put on her bonnet. Tom rose to light a candle for her; but she said: "Oh! I can do without a light, dear. My bonnet and shawl are placed ready to my hand, and I do not want a looking-glass."

"You are tolerably free from vanity, I believe," said Tom, seriously.

Margaret laughed, and said: "On the contrary, I am far too contented with my personal appearance. I fancy that I do not want the aid of a glass to look *passalement bien* in my bonnet. Besides, you know, it looks as if one had a mind above trifles to be *apparently* indifferent to dress; and then, you men think so highly of a woman who can dress for a walk in two minutes, and go out for a week with a carpet-bag. There is a great deal of coquetry in those women who take pains to convince people they have none."

Her husband said he "had no doubt that she knew all about it;" but added, "that it was bad policy thus to lay open her tactics to the enemy."

There was a faint reflex of moonlight in her bed-room when Margaret entered it, to fetch her bonnet and shawl, from a table upon which she had placed them. This table stood before a window, and as she advanced towards it, her attention was attracted by a streak of light in the corresponding window of the empty house. It was a faint red-gleaming line, down the centre of the window, and was caused, Margaret felt sure, by a light within the room, shining through an aperture left by imperfectly-fitting shutters. There could be no mistake here. Tom could not call this a delusion of the fancy; there must be somebody living in that house. Without moving from her position she called her husband to come to her for a moment. While he was making his way across the darkened room, Margaret saw the object of her curiosity suddenly eclipsed, and when he stood by her side, and said, "What is it, my love?" she uttered in a tone of vexation—"It has gone, now!"

"What have you lost?"

"Why, I certainly saw a light in the room opposite," she replied.

"In that empty house? Nonsense! Why, Margaret, I shall be afraid to leave you here alone all day if you take fancies into your head about that old place. Mrs. Bennett and all the other landladies in the street say it is haunted, I dare say, and I think it very likely that the house may be used occasionally by people who have an interest in keeping it unoccupied."

"I did not think of that," replied Margaret, as if relieved by the idea. "Yes, I daresay that accounts for what I have seen." And she related to her husband what she had seen or thought she saw before dinner, and her speculations about the old fruit-woman. He rallied her upon her taste for the mysterious, and promised to make inquiries of the agent concerning the house, and obtain an order to look over it, if possible. Margaret confessed that she should like to see the inside of the melancholy mansion, and begged that he would fulfil his promise speedily. On their return home that night, as they stood at the door-step waiting for admittance, the black frowning front of the Empty House again attracted their attention.

"Margaret," said her husband, "I can almost share your queer fancies about that house, now. How dark and mysterious it looks! there is a nameless terror about it! One feels inclined to write over the doorway

"All hope abandon, ye who enter here."

"Yes, but we are not going to enter there; at least, not to-

night, and here comes Betsy, at last, to let us into a very different sort of place."

Before she undressed that night, Margaret gave a last look at the mysterious window opposite to assure herself that the strange light was no more to be seen. The moonlight was gone, and all outside was as blank as Erebus.

The next day and the day after, and every day after that, Margaret never failed to cross the street on returning from her morning walk with her husband, to exchange a few words with *the old lady* who sat on the doorstep of the empty house. She always bought fruit of her, and inquired kindly about her health. One cold morning, she sent her a warm shawl, and the same evening a glass of wine. On the following day the old lady smiled gratefully when she saw Mrs. Shepherd approach, and (as Margaret thought) looked at her with peculiar interest. There was a quiet dignity in the way in which she tendered her thanks that made Margaret feel sorry to have sent her little gifts by Betsy instead of taking them herself; and she said something about this regret The old lady cast a keen glance at her, and appeared pleased.

"Do you think me worth waiting on? I am an old apple-woman; you are a lady."

"You were not always an apple-woman, and you are *still* a lady. Will you tell me where you live? I should like to go to see you, and so would my husband. You have neither husband nor children, you say?"

The old lady's stern mouth relaxed into a satirical smile as she turned to Margaret, and said: "Listen to the advice of an old woman, who, whatever has been her past life, knows the world. You and your husband are young, and have your way to make in that world. Is it not so?" Margaret made a gesture of assent. "Never make friends with people in position inferior to your own; you will never grow rich if you do."

Margaret said: "We do not wish to grow rich; we care for the qualities, and not the social position of our friends."

"You will live to repent such sentiments. Besides, are you speaking honestly? Why does your husband leave you, every day, so soon after your marriage, to go to business? Is it not that he may grow rich, in time?"

"No," replied Margaret; "he works to support us both. He is not greedy of riches."

"Not now," continued the old woman; "but in a few years he, too, who is now animated by love for you, may become a slave to gold. He may toil all day and dream all night of money. He may come to love it better than anything, better even than you. He may make money his god."

"God forbid!" interrupted Margaret, half alarmed at the energetic whisper in which these words were uttered. She looked earnestly in the face of the old woman and saw in her eyes a strange light; surely that was insanity. Yes, her mysterious companion was certainly mad—on the subject of money, at least—and no wonder, she thought. The poor may well rave when they talk of wealth, for they know not its cares and troubles. She remembered the rich families in which she had lived, and had a very sober notion of the blessings of great wealth. However, she did not think it wise to contradict her companion, and sought to lead her to another subject.

"Come, you must not prophesy evil to me and my husband. You do not know him yet. You must let me bring him to see you soon. Where do you live?"

The old woman seemed to recover her usual manner in a moment at this question, and replied—

"I do not live far from here; but at present you cannot come to see me, although I am very sensible of the kindness of your offer. The time may come, and that soon, when I may send for you to see me; will you promise me to come, whenever I send, be it by day or by night?"

There was a sort of commanding entreaty about her manner as she made this request, that Margaret could not resist, and she made the promise.

"You and your husband! you will both come?" she asked, again.

"We will," said Margaret.

"Thank you! and now, my dear young lady, there is the servant of your house coming to fetch you. Good-morning, and remember your promise."

Margaret did remember her promise, but said nothing about it to Tom, for she felt sure he would laugh at her for attaching so much importance to the words of a deranged woman. If the old woman *should* send for them, she felt sure she could persuade him to accompany her.

Margaret, in her curiosity and interest concerning the poor fruit-woman, who sat daily on the door-step of an empty house, had ceased to think about the house itself. She had seen no more lights or figures through the windows, and had now grown accustomed to the dark, gloomy mass of building.

One day, on his return to dinner, Mr. Shepherd said to his wife—

"Oh! Margaret, I have at last found out the agent of the house opposite. He is a rich old curmudgeon of a lawyer, living in the Temple. I had quite a row with him to-day."

"What about?" asked Margaret.

"Why, about that house, to be sure."

"Indeed! How did it occur?"

"Very simply. I walked in his chambers, and said I should be glad if he would give me a card to see the house, No. — H—— Street. When I pronounced these words the little grey-headed old gentleman took off his spectacles that he might look at me the better, and said—'What do you want to see the house for? It's no such great beauty outside. Do you want so large a house? There are thirty-seven rooms in it.' I did not choose to be questioned, and so merely repeated my request that he would give me an order to see the house. He replied sharply that his client, the owner of the house, had desired him not to give permission to look over it to any one who objected to the rent and its contingencies. 'Now, sir,' he concluded with an ironical air, 'are you willing to pay five hundred a year for the house, and do all the repairs yourself?' Of course, I got angry at such an absurd proposal, and told him that if he managed his client's affairs in that way, they were not likely to be in a more flourishing condition than the wretched old tumble-down house itself. Five hundred a year! why it was not worth fifty; and as to repairs it would be cheaper to pull it down and build it up again. 'It may be so,' he replied, 'but my orders are imperative. Are you inclined to close with the proposal?' Upon this I burst into a laugh, and he uttered the word 'Jackanapes.' I retorted with the equally expressive term "Humbug,' and marched out of the room, as fully convinced as you can be that there is some mystery about that house, and I confess that I am curious about it myself now."

"Nay, you should leave curiosity to us woman?"

"I do not see why you women should have a monopoly of all agreeable excitements."

"No, nor I. *C'est pourquoi*, I am lighting you a cigar."

"Very well said and done. But I warn you, fair lady, that I shall cultivate the acquaintance of your mysterious friend, the apple-woman. I wonder whether Mr. Langton (that is the lawyer) knows anything about her. Since you have taken so much interest in her and her affairs, I have watched her and have come to the conclusion that you are right in your opinion that she once belonged to a superior class. A few nights ago I saw her leave her station for the night, and, taking care that she did not observe me, I followed her."

"Then you have found out where she lives?" inquired Margaret, eagerly.

"Not so fast. I followed her, as I said. She went into one

or two shops and bought provisions; but not of a kind used by poor persons. Grapes and dates—biscuits and new-laid eggs. Lastly, she went into a library. My curiosity was now very strong, and I followed her into the shop, for I wanted to know the nature of her business there. She spoke to the shopman in a low tone; upon which he went to the back of the shop, and returned with a small parcel, and she paid him some money; gold! several sovereigns. While the man was getting some change for her, she turned her head and saw me. I appeared to be absorbed in a volume I had taken from the counter; but I think her suspicion was roused, for as soon as she received the few shillings, she hastened out of the shop. I merely stayed to ask the shopman what book the old lady had just paid for, and rushed after her. To my astonishment she had gone so fast, that I saw her turning the corner of the street; and though I ran, she was out of sight when I reached it, and the coast was clear."

"How provoking!" exclaimed his wife. "But why did you not tell me this before?"

"Because I did not choose to let you know how signally I had failed. Since that day she is always gone before I come home."

"Yes," said Margaret, "I have observed that for a week past she has left earlier than usual. I do not think she is well. She has not been seen either yesterday or to-day. I hope she will come to-morrow, for I am really anxious about her. She seems so utterly alone."

"No, Margaret; I do not think she lives alone," said Tom removing his cigar again, and following a wreath of smoke with a speculative eye.

"No? Why not?"

"Because I do not think any woman who lived alone would be so careful and fastidious as she seemed to be in selecting the things she bought the other night. No. I am sure she was not thinking of herself when she went into three shops to find grapes of the best quality."

"Certainly not," said Margaret. "What was the book she bought?"

"You would never guess; and I could scarcely believe my ears when the man told me. 'It was,' he said, 'an old volume of the works of John Caartacuzena.'"

"And who, in the name of Faust and Gutemberg, was he?" asked Margaret.

"That is what I felt obliged to ask the bookseller myself; and all that he could tell me, was that Caartacuzena was a historian of the Lower Greek empire, and that he had had great

difficulty in procuring that, and several other Greek and early Italian works, for the same person. He believed she was a servant to some learned book-worm; and that she was a little of a book-worm herself; for she seemed to know all about the books, and pronounced with ease the names of the foreign cities to which he had to send to procure those which could not be got in England."

Margaret's curiosity was now highly excited.

"Strange!" she exclaimed. "An old apple-woman, who speaks and looks like a lady, is visible all day; disappears at night; dwells no one knows where; lives upon biscuits, and grapes, and dates; and reads books which no one ever heard of. A large dilapidated house, long uninhabited; said to be haunted; lights and human faces seen in it occasionally; the agent unwilling to let it be seen; and asks a preposterous rent, which he is certain will drive away any person previously disposed to take the house. Humph!"

"Humph!" said her husband, smiling. "Now, Margaret, there is a sum for you. Multiply the mystery of the House, and you obtain——"

"If you please, sir, here is a gentleman as wants to see you," said Betsy, opening the door, and thrusting in a card. Tom rose and took it. "Mr. Langton," he read in a voice of surprise, while Margaret looked more excited than ever, and sat forward in her *fauteuil* to see the visitor's entrance.

"Ask the gentleman to walk up, Betty," said Mr. Shepherd.

"Here he is, sir," replied Betsy, opening the door a little wider to admit the stranger.

He advanced into the room, removing his hat as he did so, and Margaret was much struck with the benevolent, but eccentric countenance which met her gaze. He bowed to her with the punctilious politeness of the old school, and then turned to her husband. He seemed somewhat agitated as he said, "Sir, I do not apologise for this intrusion as my business is very urgent."

Mr. Shepherd assured him that he was happy to have the opportunity of apologising for his own rude behaviour the other day. Mr. Langton looked at him with surprise, and said he did not know to what he alluded. Mr. Shepherd explained; upon which the visitor replied,

"Oh! are you *that* young man? Strange enough I do not recognise you. My sight is beginning to fail me. However, what you have just said will enable me to explain my business the sooner. You wanted to see Courtenai House? come with me now and you will see it. Its owner is a lady of birth"—here he paused a moment, as if moved by some painful feeling. "She is an

eccentric person, and has for many years led, from choice, a singular life. She is now, I fear, on her death-bed; and her last wishes, extraordinary as they are, must be complied with, if possible, You, madam," he continued, turning to Margaret whose eyes were fixed on his face. "You have, perhaps unconsciously, obtained great favour in her mind; partly from your resemblance to her family, and partly from your disinterested kindness to a stranger, apparently poor and friendless."

"The old lady who sells fruit?" interrupted Margaret. "It is I am sure. She wishes to see me? I promised to go whenever she should send for me. Has she sent for me? Is she dying? Surely, with care and attention I may restore her."

The old man looked at her with interest. "So eager to assist the suffering and the poor?"

"It is little I can do, sir," replied Margaret, gently. "For we are not rich. But my heart would be hard, indeed, if I was not willing to sacrifice a little time to the unhappy,—I who am so happy, and have leisure, and youth, and health. This poor old lady (for a lady she is I am sure) has, perhaps, taken a fancy for me. She would like me to nurse her. Is it so?"

"Nay, my dear young lady," said the old gentleman, dashing a tear from his eye, "I fear your kindness in that respect would be in vain! She is dying. Let us hasten to her. She sent me for you and your husband. I came; little expecting that you would either of you be inclined to obey the last wishes of a stranger—who must appear to you, by these very wishes, to be insane. Thank God! it is otherwise, and you will both come with me to the death-bed of Folande de Courtenai." Saying these words he seized a hand of each, and looked from one to the other with an imploring expression.

"Certainly, Margaret will go—we will both go," said Mr. Shepherd, and Margaret retired to prepare herself for going out. Her husband continued—"If it be any solace to your mind, remember that the mysterious affinities of our nature which draw the affectionate sympathies of one individual to another are generally reciprocal. It is so in the present instance. My wife has been interested in a singular manner by the old house opposite, and still more so by the old lady, ever since we came here, which is now two months ago. They have wound themselves round her mind in an extraordinary manner. She knows nothing about either; yet she feels sure that they are in some way connected with each other. She thinks she has seen a human being in the house, and is quite sure she saw a light there one night. The old lady has excited feelings of respect and interest in her mind; and you say that she saw a likeness in my wife to her own family; now Margaret's maiden name was Courtenay."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed the old gentleman, and he made inquiries eagerly concerning Margaret's pedigree, which Tom could not answer. The only things of which he was sure, in this particular, were that Margaret's family had long been settled in Yorkshire, and that she claimed no kindred with the noble house of Devonshire. "She may not claim it, sir," replied the old gentleman, "but she has it, I am certain. The striking likeness," he added, as Margaret re-appeared, "taken in conjunction with the name, is, I think, confirmation strong as any proof of the Heralds' office, and so will Folande think. If you are ready we will proceed to Courtenai House directly."

Margaret and her husband made gestures of assent, and they all three descended into the street.

When the door closed behind them Mr. Langton drew Margaret's arm within his, and, pointing to the Empty House, said—

"We shall be within those walls in a few minutes;" but instead of crossing over to the door, he led them through one or two poor streets into a mews, which, as Mr. Shepherd judged, must be at the back of Courtenai House. They proceeded to the extremity of the mews, Mr. Langton leading the way, and every step seemed familiar to him, though the night was dark, and the gaslight at the entrance served only to make darkness visible.

At last he stopped suddenly against a brick wall, and it seemed to Margaret that a part of the wall gave way before them. In reality Mr. Langton touched a spring in the lock of a door or gate in the wall, and in another moment the same door closed behind them, and Mr. and Mrs. Shepherd stood within what seemed a deserted garden. There was a chilling damp in the atmosphere, and a smell of decayed and mouldering shrubs, their feet trod upon gravel, and around and above them they could discern the dim outlines of fantastic forms, as of trees and overgrown shrubs.

Margaret seized her husband's arm in the darkness, and they followed their conductor along a path which they could not see. His steps became more rapid as he went on. It seemed to Margaret a long time before they stopped again, but it was not more than two minutes.

This time Mr. Langton took something from his pocket; it was a key, which he had some difficulty in putting into the lock of a door. He was labouring under considertble agitation, as was evident when the door at last yielded, and a light from within fell on the old man's face. It was very pale and slightly convulsed. He sunk on a bench, as if unable to proceed farther.

Mr. Shepherd closed the door by which they had entered, and then he and Margaret waited until their companion should be

sufficiently recovered to lead them on. If the external aspect of the house was melancholy and mysterious, the portion of the interior which they now saw was not calculated to destroy its effect. From the doorway at which they stood, they could see by the light of a small lamp which was placed on the ground two or three galleries branching off from a small hall. After the first few yards each seemed swallowed up in blackness. The hall itself was perfectly bare, and Margaret observed that the pavement was of black and white marble.

In a few moments Mr. Langton seemed to be again composed, and, lifting up the lamp, he begged they would follow him, in silence. He proceeded across the hall into a short corridor which communicated with another hall, far more lofty and spacious than the first. The pillars which supported it appeared numerous, and their capitals were too lofty to be visible by the light of the lamp. The marble pavement was discoloured and encrusted with dirt. Beyond a few yards around them all seemed hazy or black and impenetrable, and it would not have been easy to guess the dimensions of this hall. They came to the foot of that which must have been in former days the grand staircase of the house. It was of dark oak with handsomely-carved balustrades, and was wide enough to allow a dozen persons to ascend it abreast. The bareness and desolation of this staircase and the spacious corridor on the floor above, Margaret thought was more typical of fallen fortunes than any sight she had ever witnessed.

As they passed along the corridor something like a picture on the wall seemed agitated by the wind. Margaret and her husband looked up and saw that it was an escutcheon. It seemed carefully preserved, and shone in the light as they passed. Mr. Shepherd, who had studied heraldry a little, described the device as three tourteaux gules on a shield or; and this they afterwards learned was the Courtenai arms.

This emblem of the pride of other days was the only thing that met their eyes, except the old discoloured walls, until they reached a door at the end of a gallery on the second storey.

Mr. Langton placed the lamp on the floor, and knocked gently at the door. It was opened softly from within, and they all entered a small ante-room, faintly lighted by a lamp from the ceiling. Margaret and her husband were transfixed with astonishment at what they beheld. Before them stood a beautiful young woman in a strange but graceful costume of a dark-coloured material; her long black hair was wound round her head in soft, shining volumes. Her face was pale, but of faultless outline; her figure was tall, but was shrouded by her long dress, which ascended to her slender throat. The calmness of a conventual life seemed to

have settled on her features, and she answered Mr. Langton's agitated whispers as if she had been a statue. A few paces behind her was a black curtain, partially withdrawn, exposing to view a brilliantly-lighted room beyond. At a sign from the strange lady they followed her into it, and great was the surprise of our young couple to find themselves in a large apartment hung round with black, and illuminated by twelve huge wax tapers placed at equal distances round a bier over which was thrown a purple pall. At the head of the bier was a canopy on which the Courtenai arms were brilliantly emblazoned, and above them glittered an imperial crown wrought in gold. Margaret and her husband were left here alone for a few minutes. They looked at each other in silent amazement for a space, and then Mr. Shepherd said, in a whisper:

"I think I can guess what this room signifies."

What?" inquired Margaret in the same tone:

"Madness on the subject of family pride."

"How?"

"These are the Courtenai arms. The Courtenai's were Earls of Flanders, you know, and a line of them were Greek Emperors, in the time of the Crusades."

"Baldwin de Courtenai," muttered Margaret.

"Ah! I remember; my father told me all about it when I was a child. But who lies there, think you?"

"Some one of this noble and imperial family. Perhaps the last of his line. Perhaps the last occupant of this house, in which he now lies alone, like an Egyptian king in the interior of a pyramid. But what has this to do with the object of our visit?"

At this instant the drapery on the wall, corresponding with that on the side from which they had entered, was partly drawn aside, and the beautiful stranger stood in the opening and beckoned them to advance. They did so, and stood within another, and a very different apartment. It was large, dimly lighted, and dreary-looking. The floor was uncarpeted; the walls were undressed. There seemed to be no furniture, but a table on which was a crucifix and a skull, and a lamp, an antique oak chair, and a large gloomy bed, on which they saw by the light of the lamp some one reclining supported by pillows. Margaret knew those finely-cut features and large searching eyes again, though she had seen them in such different circumstances. It was the old fruit woman. Beside the bed sat Mr. Langton with his eyes fixed on the sufferer. When Mr. and Mrs. Shepherd had approached, she stretched her thin hand to them and said:

"May God help you! I have but a few hours to live, and I would set my affairs in order before I die. I am not what I seemed.

I am the daughter of a noble—nay, imperial line, and the possessor of great wealth. For more than twenty years I have lived a life of poverty, penance, and seclusion, in expiation of a crime committed in youth. Seek not to inquire into the nature of this crime. Suffice it to say that the wealth which was its reward I abstained from using. I dared not restore the house of my fathers with this money. It would have been too great a joy for me to see this house as it was in my childhood. I waited to find some one worthy to inherit my wealth, and who would protect my innocent child." Here she laid her hand on the bowed head of the beautiful girl who knelt beside her. "In you I think I have discovered what I sought so long. They tell me," she added, turning quickly to Margaret, "you were by birth a Courtenay. That sweet noble face did not deceive me, and now I know you are my fittest heir, for my child must not inherit my wealth. It is forbidden. Listen, then, to my last request, and comply with it if you can. All my property is now in the charge of my old friend here (who will not accept it). I leave to you and your heirs, on these conditions: That you take care of my daughter, and if she marries, give her a moderate dowry; that you will restore this house according to the directions which she will give you; that you assume the name and arms of my family; and that you will bury me with my father. The body lies embalmed in the next room. I have kept it there as a memorial of my crime, which disgraced his ancient name, and brought him, with his proud spirit broken, to the grave. Will you grant this request of the last of the Courtenais? She looked eagerly for their reply. They glanced at each other, then at Mr. Langton, who seemed to implore their consent, then at the lovely, kneeling girl, who seemed lost in prayer, and heeded them not. Hence they gazed on the dying woman, and simultaneously they extended their hands, and exclaimed:

"We will."

"Thank God! And you may scatter blessings with the wealth I dare not touch for myself." And so saying, she closed her eyes and sank back exhausted.

Mrs. Shepherd then spoke in a clear, earnest voice: "We do not covet your wealth, for it will bring much trouble; but we will not refuse to take charge of it till a better claim than ours is made to it."

"Enough! I know you are good. Bid me farewell now, for I must be alone with these," waving her hand to Mr. Longton and her daughter. Margaret knelt down, and the dying lady blessed her, and spoke solemn words of her duties hereafter. "The Courtenais," she said, "should be foremost in all good deeds," and Margaret saw that the insanity of Pride and Birth, and reliance on Wealth

still lingered in the heart of the penitent. Margaret put her arm round the daughter, and swore to the mother that she would never forsake her, but be to her as a sister. In the meantime her husband whispered apart with Mr. Langton, who wrote on his tablets some few words. Then Mr. Shepherd bade the now-exhausted patient farewell for ever; and he and his wife withdrew, attended by Mr. Langton, who, overcome with emotion, spoke no word till they reached the outer gate, when he pressed their hands, and said in a hoarse tone:

"It will all be over when I see you next; and you shall know all that can be told."

Bewildered, and half believing what had passed to be a dream, Mr. and Mrs. Shepherd returned home. They could not rest, but sat up all night in a state of indescribable emotion. From time to time they looked out upon the great mansion which was now to be their own; but they saw no sign of living thing about it. Towards morning, they both fell asleep, and when they woke they could not believe that all which had happened the preceding night was not a dream—one of those vivid dreams which mimic our waking existence so well that the dreamer is puzzled to tell the dream from the reality.

Another year saw our young couple established as Mr. and Mrs. Courtenay, in the midst of the renovated grandeur of Courtenay House. A beautiful, stately girl, of simple manners, resides with them, and bears their name. She is believed to be a distant relation of Mrs. Courtenay. She has many suitors, but is indifferent to all, and spends much of her time in a small library adjoining her bedroom. This library contains a collection of all the books which treat of the history of the Courtenais of Flanders and Constantinople and their descendants. The picture of a beautiful woman, with a basket of fruit hangs in that room. It is a very singular picture, and provokes many questions, to which Miss Courtenay makes but one reply: "It is a portrait of my mother." Another picture representing a beautiful youth in an old-fashioned costume, hangs opposite to the former. It is surmounted with the Courtenai arms carefully blazoned, and is supposed to be a portrait of her father. About that picture she gives no information. Margaret detects in it a striking likeness to Mr. Langton, who left his property to Miss Courtenay, and retired to a religious house in Rome shortly after the death of Folande de Courtenai, his first and only love. He wept at parting from her child—wept because she was not *his* child, and because he felt that it was his duty to leave her, or she would draw away his thoughts from heaven, upon which he would fix them for the brief space of his existence.

RECOLLECTIONS OF AUSTRALIAN ENTOMOLOGY.

If Australia has, occasionally, been spoken of in a more or less disparaging manner, because of the paucity, in actual numbers, as well as in species, of its Mammalia, and, in a less degree, of its birds; the same cannot be said of its insects, whose numbers and tribes, flying, crawling, and swimming, absolutely defy computation; as anyone who has ever resided in, or travelled for a couple of days through any of the "Bush," is but too well aware.

I say "too well," because they are unpleasant, some of these insects—exceedingly so, in fact, to every sense; some of them being positively terrifying, so strange and weird, not to say unnatural, are their forms; whilst others are dangerous in the highest degree, bearing, as they do, almost certain destruction to their adversaries in their heads or tails. Others, however, are interesting from their habits, others from the periodicity that marks their appearance and disappearance; others from peculiar forms, which simulate twigs, grass, or leaves; others from the gorgeous livery they wear, and others again, from all these peculiarities combined.

In this article, I purpose to consider, briefly, a few of the more remarkable species of insects with which I became acquainted during a lengthened sojourn in the great Southern Land, beginning with that widely diffused persecutor of all new arrivals, the mosquito.

Some years ago I remember reading a story that went the round of the newspapers, to the effect that an officer of some regiment, stationed at Sydney, had sent one of these pests home to his daughter in England in a letter, and that whilst engaged in perusal the young lady had felt a sharp puncture on the wrist, and upon glancing at the spot, beheld a golden fly that escaped before it could be secured. As the letter informed her of the nature of its enclosure, the golden fly was at once identified as the Australian mosquito. I need scarcely dilate upon the improbability of the story. Of course, it was utterly impossible for the insect—a particularly fragile creature—to have survived the pressure to which it must necessarily have been subjected in the mail-bag; and, unfortunately, so far from being a "golden" fly, the mosquito is very plainly dressed; being, in point of fact, neither more nor less

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than a full cousin to the well-known gnat, so familiar to everyone who rambles of a summer's evening through the greem lanes of old England, where it may be seen disporting in myriads, beneath the grateful shade of the overhanging trees and hedges : the only difference being, that its English congener rarely bites, whereas the Australian insect is one of the most bloodthirsty little abominations in existence.

During the great heat of the day the mosquito, wisely, keeps under cover ; but once the sun has disappeared beneath the horizon out he comes from his retirement, with keenest appetite, and pounces with unerring aim upon his prey. You may shut up your tent as closely as you please, you cannot keep him out ; you may hang mosquito-curtains round your bed and fancy yourself free from his attacks ; pooh ! he laughs at your vain precautions, and no sooner have you extinguished your candle and settled yourself down—as you think—for a comfortable sleep, than "bizz!" the horrible sound is heard in painful proximity to your ear, and presently a sharp prick, probably on the side of your nose, announces that war has actually begun. You have nothing for it but to re-light your candle, and hunt your foe to death ; unless you prefer, like a friend of mine, to allow him to sate himself with your blood ; which done, he will retire to rest, and be found next morning clinging to your curtain, a bloated little vampire, too heavy to fly, and will then fall an easy prey to your avenging finger. There is one drawback, however, to this course of proceeding ; the longer the mosquito sucks, the bigger and more painful will be the tumour that arises round the puncture he has made ; so as I remarked before, you must declare war, and war to the death, at once, with your tiny but implacable foe.

The mosquito neither bites during the middle of the day, nor the middle of the night, but just before and after sunrise and sunset he is on the alert, and positively ubiquitous. The deepest shaft in Ballarat, or the closest room in Melbourne or Geelong are alike familiar with his presence ; the margins of rivers and creeks, and clumps of bush fifty or more miles from water, he frequents them all alike ; town and country they are the same to him ; mountain, valley, or wooded plain, or barren table-land, he has no more predilection for the one than the other ; nay, he has even been met with ten miles out at sea. If he cannot get at you by any other means, he will be down upon you through the chimney ; and if that is stuffed, which can scarcely be done without placing you in some danger of suffocation, it will go hard for him but he will find an entrance somewhere, and a pin-hole will afford him ample means of ingress.

The "old hands" assert that the mosquito only bites "new

chums," as they term recent arrivals at the colonies; but all I can say is that he feasted on *me* as eagerly at the end of seven years' residence, as he did at the beginning. But I am not quite sure whether or not that lapse of time entitles me to consider myself an old hand; the mosquitoes, evidently, did not seem to think it did.

Another almost insupportable pest are the flies, which are so numerous and troublesome that an acquaintance of mine pronounced the fourth Egyptian plague endemic in Australia. Be that as it may, these abominable insects—which vary in size from the tiniest little blue midge imaginable, celebrated for the pertinacity with which it insists on getting into the corners of your eyes, down to the enormous red, bloated-looking, meat-flies, as big as a humble bee, which oblige you to keep the closest watch over your provisions, are almost as bad as, if not worse than, the mosquitoes. It is next to impossible to keep anything out of their way; I have seen mutton spoiled by them in less than a quarter of an hour, after it had been killed, and could tell tales of these creatures and their larvæ, that would make one's hair to stand on end; but, as I do not wish to disgust anyone, I forbear. The intermediate kinds, or sizes of fleas are not particularly different from those we see at home; they are just as inquisitive, familiar and just as annoying as their relatives in this country, with whom I really think they must occasionally intermarry; for in the ship that carried me to Europe from Melbourne we had their delightful company all the way in the saloon, though where they came from no one could make out. They were cunning, too, and would not be lured by any bribe of peppered sugar to their destruction, but stuck by us to the last, though they retired from observation during the cold weather at the Cape Horn, to re-appear some weeks before we cast anchor in the Mersey. It is a curious fact that the further you go into the bush the more numerous do the meat-flies become. They are comparatively scarce in Melbourne; but it is just the reverse with the house-flies, whose name in the town is legion, whilst up the country they are found in moderate numbers, and in some places not at all.

There is another domestic insect, remarkable for its agility, which thrives wonderfully in Australia; and with true democratic insolence, makes itself quite as much at home in the Honorable Mr. Goldbags' sumptuous residence, as in the meanest hut of the poorest digger at the mines.

Australia does not possess many butterflies. A few grey and brown, insignificant-looking little things, were the only representatives of that class of insects with which I chanced to become acquainted in the bush: but there are a great many varieties of moths.

Wonderful-looking creatures are some of these: some, when at rest, so exactly resemble a withered leaf that you would never suppose them to be anything else, unless you chanced to see them move, which they are very careful not to do whilst you are standing by. The only thing that betrays them is the phosphorescent glare of their eyes, which shine, even in daylight, like little carriage-lamps, and are, positively, tiny meteors in the dark. Another species, a tremendous brown fellow, is very nearly as large as a sparrow, and comes with a thump against your window.

"I recollect meeting with the pupa of one of these insects, one day, as it was working its way out of the ground, preparatory to casting off its chrysalis shell, and completing its metamorphosis. I mistook it, at first sight, for the cone of some species of pine, and under that impression stooped to pick it up, wondering where such a thing could possibly have come from in that land of gum-trees and acacias; it was fully five inches in length, and the moment it felt my hand, wriggled back into its hole, greatly to my amazement, so I proceeded to dig it out with my knife, and in so doing must have wounded it, for it bled a good deal afterwards—a colourless, ichory kind of blood--and never came to anything. However, I fell in with plenty of the creatures afterwards, and was told by a Cornish acquaintance that they were Buskum Sneevers, a name I had never heard before, and of which I greatly doubt whether I caught the true pronunciation.

Australia possesses several kinds of native bees; and it is a curious fact that these useful and laborious insects—I mean, of course, the European variety—seldom succeed well in that country—at least, in any part of it where I have resided. They either fly away into some unknown region, or, if they remain with their owners, refuse to work. The reason appears to be that the climate is so fine, flowers so plentiful all the year round, and so large a quantity of "manna" is secreted by several varieties of Eucalyptus, that they grow lazy and idle. "Why should we toil when we can live without fatiguing ourselves?" seems to be their mode of reasoning; whether or not, they act as if it were, and lay up no provision for the winter that never comes. Perhaps they are led astray by the bad example of the native bees, which are thorough vagabonds, destitute of stings, and lead an erratic, merry life, flitting from flower to flower, and from sweet to sweet, all the day long, and taking no thought for the morrow, like the human aborigines; though, unlike them, they invariably have a fixed dwelling-place, to which, however, they only resort at night.

From bees to wasps the transition is natural and easy; some of the latter are tremendous fellows—one, especially, a handsome blue insect, with great gauzy wings, is nearly two inches in length,

and carries a sting fully a quarter of an inch in length, with which it attacks even small birds.

I once watched a strange combat between one of these creatures and a large tarantula, which terminated tragically for the latter, in spite of his powerful arms and formidable jaws. The tarantula was quickly walking down the side of a smooth blue-gum tree, probably on the look-out for prey. I had had an eye on him for some time, and was meditating an attack—for I had no desire to see him about my premises—when I suddenly beheld him drop as if he had been shot, or galvanised, or something of the kind. I expected to see him fall to the ground, but he did not; he had thrown out a thread, upon which he swung at a distance of a foot below the spot where I had first perceived him; at the same instant something whizzed past me, and flew straight at the tarantula, which wheeled round, still hanging by his thread, and caught it in his long, hairy arms, which he clasped tightly round it, whatever it was, for a few seconds; then, relaxing his hold, he permitted a large blue wasp to fly away; it soon, however, returned to the charge, was again embraced and again released by the tarantula, but after a shorter interval than at the first encounter. This was repeated several times, and at length the gigantic spider fell to the ground, dead—slain by the more potent venom of its foe, which seemed to have suffered no inconvenience whatever from the apparently formidable embrace of its victim.

That Australia is a land of paradoxes—a reputation it has long enjoyed—could not, I think, be better exemplified than by a comparison between the spiders of our own country and those that are most commonly met with at our Antipodes; where, reversing the natural order of things, the fly preys upon the spider, and not the spider on the fly. A man I knew on the goldfields used to be greatly annoyed by a loud, intermittent buzzing in his tent, which, for a long time, he was quite unable to trace to its source; but at length discovered that it was caused by a large black fly, striped with bright yellow traverse bands, which had taken up its abode beneath his table; and a curious abode it was, as I can testify, for I was by when he discovered it.

Upon examining the table, as soon as we had found out from whence the noise proceeded, we discovered on its under surface a large patch of hard yellow clay, which must have been brought from a considerable distance, as there was none at all resembling it anywhere in the neighbourhood. Upon breaking up this patch, we found it to be hollow, and divided into several chambers—sixteen, as well as I remember—each filled up with a number of small spiders of various kinds, not dead, but paralysed; and, in addition, each cell contained an egg or grub of the fly; the spiders,

evidently, being a provision laid up for her offspring, whilst in their immature state, by their provident and industrious mother. It will thus be seen that the spiders haven't it all their own way in Australia; and that the invitation to "walk into my parlour" proceeds, there, from the creature which is invited here.

Australia contains prodigious multitudes of ants, of every size and colour. Some huge monsters, of a bright red hue, are nearly two inches in length, and are very appropriately termed "soldiers": there are black ants, too, of equal size, which are, as appropriately, denominated "niggers:" both kinds are armed with a formidable sting, fully a quarter of an inch in length; and wage a perpetual war against each other. The wound they inflict is fatal to the smaller creatures that constitute their prey, and is exquisitely painful to man and the larger animals.

Other ants are so small as to be barely perceptible to the unassisted eye, and, like their colossal congeners, are red and black, but, unlike them, are devoid of stings. Between these extremes there are ants of every variety of size, all more or less objectionable.

One species, which is extremely active, is about half an inch in length, black, with yellow nippers, and is armed with a terrible sting. It is so ferocious as to have received the name of "bull-dog" from the colonists, which is singularly well-applied; for, once it has fastened on a foe, the death of the victim alone will cause it to release its hold, for even when crushed to atoms itself, its sting and nippers remain pertinaciously fixed in the wound. I shall not soon forget sitting down on the nest of some of these creatures, shortly after my arrival in the colony—it was not a comfortable seat.

There is a horrible story current among the old hands, concerning these formidable insects, to the effect, that in the earlier days of the convict settlement, in New South Wales, some bush-rangers had suspicions, whether well grounded or not, that one of their "pals" was playing them false, and communicating their movements to the police: on this unfortunate a drum-head court-martial (if I may use the expression) was one day held; when he was sentenced, unanimously, to be tied to a "bull-dog" nest, and there left to his fate.

That this atrocious sentence was really carried out there cannot be the least doubt; for some months afterwards the skeleton of a man was discovered in the bush, still bound to a stake that had been driven into the middle of the nest: and, moreover, if I mistake not, one of the party made a full confession afterwards. These ants will anatomise a snake, or a small bird, if placed near their habitation, in the most beautiful manner; but are exceedingly undesirable neighbours notwithstanding.

Another variety, rather shorter than the last, and of a dull red colour, has a head nearly half the length of its body, and is armed with a pair of most formidable-looking nippers, which, nevertheless, are perfectly harmless, as is their possessor, which neither bites nor stings, nor molests the sojourner in the bush in any way.

Another species is soft and white, and mostly inhabits decaying wood, from whence it is eagerly picked by many kinds of birds; the common poultry, for instance, being particularly partial to it, when they will not touch the other kinds of ants. I do not know how the species contrive to exist, as it never appears to leave its home, whether by day or night.

There are also red or purple ants, with long, feeble-looking legs, with which, however, their owners continue to run very fast. These creatures do not sting, but, in common with several other varieties, exhale a most disgusting odour when alarmed; and, as they have a great taste for sugar and sweet things in general, are rather unpleasant visitors in a tent; not even the ingenuity they display in getting at their prey compensating the poor digger for the damage done to the stores.

In one place where I had been greatly plagued by these depredators, I suspended a bag of sugar to the ridge-pole of my tent, and went out thinking it was secure; but upon my return, some hours afterwards, I found that a regular highway had been established between the sugar-bag and the nearest ant-hill, along which some thousands of the long-legged inhabitants were hurrying to and fro, carrying off my property as fast as ever they could. Although much annoyed, I could not forbear watching them for a moment, as they struggled, heavily-laden, up the string that suspended the bag from the pole of the tent, stopping every now and then to rest, and permit their descending companions to pass lightly over their bodies. I next placed my sugar in a basin set in a saucer full of water on the table, and thought it would be safe, but it wasn't, for the ants actually brought up little bits of straw and grass, with which they formed bridges across the gulf that separated them from the object of their desires, which they carried away in triumph. As a *dernier ressort*, I placed the sugar-basin in a large tin pan full of water; but the wretches got on the overhanging side of the tent, and let themselves drop on to the coveted sweets, where, however, they were obliged to remain until I came in, when I put an end to their thievish propensities by pitching the whole "biling" into the fire.

The peppermint ants are little black creatures, about a quarter of an inch in length, that generally inhabit the old peppermint trees (whence their name), from the hollow interiors of which a tap or two on the bark will cause them to emerge, in countless myriads,

tainting the air around with the insufferable odour they exhale. These little pests are as fond of sweet things as the others, and are also very partial to meat, particularly when cooked.

All the preceding species are diurnal, and retire to their nests with the setting sun; but there are nocturnal ants, too, and ghastly looking beings they are. The day ants are gregarious, and always hunt in packs, but their nocturnal relatives are unsociable creatures and startle the digger, singly, as he sits at his solitary tea, or reads his novel after the day's work is done. They have black, attenuated bodies, and long white legs; they appear mysteriously on the edge of the table, or the corner of your books; lift up their antennæ in a menacing manner, and scuttle out of sight; they do not appear to be a numerous tribe, but to me they were more unwelcome even than the peppermints, though they never did me any harm; but I could not fancy them "natural," and would sooner have seen a tarantula at my board.

Of the termites I do not speak, as they are restricted to the far north, where I have never been: and so, taking leave of the ants, I pass on to another species of insect remarkable for the regularity of its advent and disappearance; the March Fly, as it is called, from appearing invariably on the first of that month, and as constantly retiring from observation on or before the first of April; after which date I do not remember ever having seen one, although thousands of them might have been visible in every direction, the day before. It is a sedate-looking, large-eyed, black insect, with longitudinal white stripes; and is a very ferocious monster, about the size of a bluebottle fly, fastening with avidity on your hands and face, and inflicting a sharp wound with its proboscis; but beyond the sting of the puncture itself, little harm is done, as the March Fly instils no poison into the wound it has made.

Scorpions and centipedes are amongst the most unpleasing reminiscences of the Australian bush, that a traveller there can carry back to his native land; for they are very dangerous creatures, far more so than the tarantula of which I have already spoken, or "triantelope," as the diggers call it, though I cannot say I ever suffered any damage at their hands, or, I should say, tails. The old shepherds used formerly to get up a duel between some two or three creatures, which usually terminated in favour of the scorpion, I am told; they would also place it in the centre of a circle of burning embers, when the scorpion, finding escape impossible, turned its tail over, and, stinging itself in the back would presently expire. The centipede lays its eggs at the beginning of the Australian winter, and remains closely coiled round them till the return of Spring, when the young ones are

hatched, and the mother eats as many of them as she can. Centipedes, scorpions, and tarantulas are, generally, found concealed, during the day, beneath the loose bark of a dead tree, or an unstripped post or rail, and are the favourite food of the Australian magpie, which displays considerable ingenuity in extracting them from their hiding-places. Having, probably by the sense of smell, ascertained the lurking-place of one of these disagreeable insects, mag taps the spot sharply with her powerful beak, and, upon the centipede, scorpion, or tarantula, as the case may be, popping out to ascertain the cause of the disturbance, snaps it up, and cracking it carefully from head to tail, swallows the dainty morsel, and flies off, with a self-congratulatory chuckle, to repeat the process elsewhere.

The Mantis (sacred, from the Greek) is a curious insect, of a green or blue colour, and varying in size from that of a grasshopper, to that of a wren. It derives its name from a habit it has of sitting upright on a leaf or branch, wrapped closely in its gauzy wings, its head turned skyward, in a contemplative, quasi-devotional attitude, whilst its fore-legs are crossed over each other, and partly raised, as if in prayer. It is a harmless and not very common denizen of the bush; at least, it is not very frequently seen, probably on account of its colour harmonising completely with the foliage of the trees upon which it lives.

Another very strange creature is colonially named "the walking-stick, from the resemblance it bears to an animated dry twig. There appear to be several varieties of these abnormal-looking beings, at least they are of various sizes and colours, and inhabit, some the water, some the dry land. They can all run with considerable agility; and it is very curious to watch the terrestrial beings making their way along the sparse flowering tops of the Australian grapes. I have been told that these creatures develop, in course of time, into the Mantis, but have no personal knowledge of the metmorphosis, which, however, I do not consider to be unlikely, as the bodies of both are not very dissimilar.

The locusts—at least, such is the name they receive in the colonies—are a numerous and interesting family, some of which are not bigger than a bee, whilst others are not less than an European wren. The latter are of a bright-green colour, with golden eyes and are the most indefatigable songsters I ever heard; the hotter the weather the louder they chirp; and though not at all unpleasing when heard for a short time, the concert becomes alr but intolerable when kept up, as it is, without intermission, from daylight to dark.

Grasshoppers are without number in the summer, and may be seen of almost every size and colour, hopping about in eevry

direction, and contributing their quota to the shrill concert of the ocusts.

Many other curious insects there are in the Australian bush, which space will not permit of my enumerating here; but the following are worthy of a brief notice, and with a slight description of them, I shall bring the preent article to a close.

During the summer months any person who feels an interest in such matters, can scarcely have failed noting a curious little beetle, most destructive to furniture and dry wood in general, that looks exactly as if some one had cut off its head in a slanting direction forwards; and a grub, the "carpenter," which constructs or itself a habitation out of little bits of twig, rounded neatly off at either end, and fastened together by means of a species of silk at weaves for the purpose, which puts me in mind that there are several kinds of native silk-worms in the colonies, which, I am persuaded, will be turned to a profitable use some day.

One more reminiscence and I have done. Years ago I recollect reading an account of a curious insect called the "burying-beetle," which performs the "last offices" for mice and small birds; but in Australia there are coleoptera endowed with similar propensities, which I have seen ambitiously attempting the sepulchre of an ox, and that not without a fair prospect of success had they not been interrupted.

MY FIRST CASE.

PART I.

One bright morning, in the year 1863, having, like many another aspirant to legal distinction, little business to attend to; I had given instructions to the small youth, who sat in my outer office as my representative clerk, that I should return to my chambers in an hour; had inserted a roll of paper in my pocket—so as to have at least the semblance of a prospective consultation—and having quitted the precincts of the Inner Temple at a sufficiently rapid pace as to impress the world with my professional importance, I found myself presently sauntering leisurely along the Strand.

Seeing no reason why even so exalted an individual as a barrister-at-law (providing he had as much of his time on his hands as I had) should be debarred from the innocent, if unprofitable indulgence which cockney nursery-maids and their infant charges delight in, viz., a ramble through the Lowther Arcade I was about to cross the road, when a hansom-cab at the moment dashed up, and so arrested my footsteps.

"Hilloa! Stop!" cried a lusty voice from the vehicle.

The cab, thereupon, drew up to the kerbstone, and a gentleman sprang forth. The next instant my hand was seized by his with a grip that corresponded with the previous vigour of his voice.

"Tom Webb! my old friend! yours is the first familiar face I have yet seen; and there are few others, old fellow, I should care to see so well. How are you? What! he actually forgets me, I believe!"

And Jack Temple laughed gaily, as he perceived the changes of wonder, pleasure, and surprise, show themselves on my face; sentiments which for some seconds impeded those words of friendly recognition, which, as soon as I had recovered myself, I was not slow to lavish upon my old school-fellow.

Temple and I had been at Winchester together; and in those happy days, each had been the other's chosen comrade, vowed and eternal friendship. Jack had quitted the school some time before I did. It was his intention to follow a commercial life, and I subsequently heard that after beating about the city for a year or two, he had obtained an excellent appointment in a banking-house in France. Ours, as with such friendship generally, had relaxed

soon after the first separation, and I had heard nothing further of my old companion during the ensuing years.

And now we had met unexpectedly in the Strand!

"I thought, Temple, that by this time, you would have settled to a Parisian life; have married a *grizette*, or a *petrelouse;* that you would have tried to assasinate the Emperor, or possibly have been yourself guillotined. I little anticipated seeing you here to-day!"

"*N'importe, mon ami,*" returned Jack, smiling, "the pleasure is sweetest which is unexpected. This is my first day in England; we will dedicate it, if you please, to 'auld lang syne,' that is, if the celebration will not keep you away from your professional affairs."

"With all my heart," I rejoined; "and as to keeping me away from my professional affairs, Egad! I only wish my professional affairs wouldn't keep away so pertinaciously from me!"

And I thought with inward disgust, of my solitary youth at the Temple, perched, doing nothing, upon his stool.

Of course we dined together that day in magnificent style, and smoked and chatted, and drank expensive wine in a manner that, I am afraid, my means at that period scarcely justified. And, of course, after feasting in this wise, I took my recovered friend to my snug bachelor residence at Maida Hill. Here I proposed to pass a quiet evening in the mutual recapitulation of our experiences.

I found, however, to my surprise, that my friend, in all things else so frank and confiding, was evidently desirous to be brief and uncommunicative upon his present affairs. He told me shortly that the banking firm with which he had been connected had failed a few months previously, and that he had at present no employment on his hands.

As he spoke, a dark and ominous cloud settled on his face which I was at the time unable to account for, but which was so evident as to make me considerably uneasy. Ah, little did I know how the failure of that banking firm—so slightly alluded to—was destined to influence the thrilling history of which these pages are a record.

"It is six years, Jack, since last we parted were," said I, looking placidly at my friend through the cloud of smoke emitted from our cigars, and growing quite sentimental, what with the wine and the many tender emotions the sight of my companion had awakened in my breast.

"Is it so long? Well, well: *tempus fugit.* I have seen a good deal of the world in the time," was Jack's quiet reply.

"Why, the deuce, then, don't you tell us something that you

have seen?" was on the tip of my tongue, but was repressed before uttered, as I remembered that if Temple was not disposed to tell me any of his private concerns, it was certainly not my place to ask him, nor to grow angry with him for not being more communicative. Indeed, the one or two questions which I put to him as to his present journey to England, and his late adventures in France, were so briefly answered that I felt I was upon delicate ground, and was effectually deterred from pursuing the subject further.

But the more I saw of my companion, the more his manner impressed me with the conviction that he had something weighty on his mind, and which he was studious to conceal.

Curiosity is said to be a strong agent in the mind of all men. Yet I trust it was something more and nobler than curiosity that made me anxious to discover what Temple's secret was. He, like myself, was an orphan, and I knew that he had but few—even in England—whom he would care to take into confidence, and in whose counsel he could trust. It would have rejoiced my heart greatly to have been of service to him, and if he had a secret that was really preying upon his mind, I felt that I might perhaps have been the man to assist, to console, and relieve him. In truth, I was somewhat mortified that my old school-fellow had withdrawn his confidence from me, being conscious, as I was, that I never had deserved such treatment from him.

I sighed as these thoughts passed through my mind; but after the advances I had made—advances which had been repulsed, not roughly, but too evidently with evasion, I knew not what I could further do.

It had been arranged that Temple, having no acquaintances in town, should pass the night as my guest. My worthy landlady was consulted upon the matter, and in consideration of a little agreement which I had made with her privately, had at once acceded to the arrangement, and it was determined that Jack should sleep in a little chamber adjoining my own.

It was not, however, till shamefully late at night—or rather early in the morning—that we thought of rest. At length, however, my guest retired to his room, I accompanying him to the door.

Wishing him good-night, I was about to leave him, when, as if actuated by an impulse, he seized my hand.

"Webb," he said, in a low, earnest tone, "once I had no secrets from you. I have determined this night that I will have none now. God knows I need a friend. By chance I have found one, whom I have always found a true one, and, though my experience of the world makes me doubt the fidelity of all men, yet I will believe, and *do* believe, that you will do what you can to help me——"

"Do not doubt that I will, Jack," I interrupted with fervour.

"I do not doubt it, and to-morrow I will tell you my story, and be guided by your counsel. I should have made a clean breast of it to you to-night, but the secret is not wholly my own, and it is necessary—most necessary to be cautious. I told you that I had come to England on pleasure. In this I did not speak the truth. I have come to England to track a villain to justice. On the success of my exertions depends the happiness and honour of a noble-hearted old man, and of—of——"

"Of what, my dear Jack," I interrupted observing that he hesitated, and suddenly stopped short.

"Good night," was Temple's only reply. "To-morrow you shall know all."

Our hands met in a clasp which spoke more than words; the door closed, and the next moment I sought the solitude of my own room.

So deeply was the above conversation impressed upon my mind, and so much was I affected by the earnestness of my friend's manner, that several hours passed restlessly ere I could sufficiently compose my mind for sleep; and during these hours I now and then could hear a noise in the adjoining chamber, which testified to the fact that Temple was not more disposed for slumber.

In the morning I arose early and repaired to the breakfast-room, in which I found Temple already before me, impatiently pacing backwards and forwards across the floor.

He then made no allusion to our conversation of the previous night, nor did I feel disposed to be the first to introduce it. Breakfast, however, over, I invited my mysterious guest to take a stroll in the garden. He declined the invitation with an impatient gesture, and turning from the window, out of which he had been vacantly gazing, threw himself into a chair.

Listen to me, Webb," he said. "I want to talk to you about what I said last night. You are a lawyer, and may be able to tell me what steps to take. I am sure, for my part, I know not."

I bade him be assured that I was only anxious to save him, and pushing my cigar-case towards him, invited him, if he pleased, to smoke. He silently lighted an Havannah, and after taking a whiff or two, thus began:

"When I quitted England, about five years ago, I bore with me a letter of introduction to Messrs. Verne and Beaumarchais, the bankers, of Paris, with whom my father had once had considerable business transactions. Immediately upon my arrival at that city of pleasure, I presented myself to the head of the firm, M. Emilie Beaumarchais, for "Verne" had been extinct, except in name, for the last twenty years.

Monsieur Beaumarchais received me very cautiously, read my letter, inquired after my father's health, and also as to my own business capabilities and experience, and shaking me warmly by the hand, bade me call upon him again on the following day.

In short, the result of this second interview was my being installed as correspondent to the firm, and, according to the ancient custom there, I was furnished with an apartment in the house, which served both for the place of business and the residence of the principal, his staff, and his family.

The business of Verne and Beaumarchais, though very respectable and of long standing, was not of great extent. Many employées were not, therefore, requisite to carry it on. These consisted of Jules Lefevre, the bookkeeper, chief cashier, and, in fact, general manager of the firm, myself, and three other young men.

But it was well known to all who had transactions with the house that Jules Lefevre was its prop and mainstay—in fact, the principal's right hand. For Monsieur Beaumarchais was well stricken with years, added to which he had for a long period suffered from ill-health, which had precluded him from giving much of his attention to his business concerns.

"But if the world were disposed to look thus well upon Monsieur Beaumarchais' manager, no one was more ready to bear witness to his servant's worth than M. Beaumarchais himself. In this good opinion of my superior I must confess that, from the very first, I was unable to concur, nor in this respect (whatever the external world might think of him) did I find myself singular amongst my fellow-clerks. Not that he was ever otherwise than courteous, even to servility, to those beneath him; but I felt somehow a repulsion from him from the beginning, and my prejudice, though based rather upon a mysterious intuition than matured reflection, was founded but too well, as the sequel proved.

"Jules Lefevre was tall and thin, of a dusky complexion, and with keen grey eyes that never regarded you fixedly, but such that, if you glanced up at him unexpectedly, you would find peering at you furtively beneath his bushy brows. Indeed, one could scarcely contemplate the master and the man without remarking instantly the difference that existed between Monsieur Beaumarchais's open, frank manners, and his noble, candid brow, and the trickery and cunning that lurked under the glances of Jules Lefevre.

"With Monsieur Beaumarchais I rapidly became a favourite, and was frequently honoured with a special invitation to pass the evening, after office hours, with the family, which consisted only of Monsieur Beaumarchais himself and his daughter, Leonore. I need not say, old boy, that these evenings were looked forward to by me

with the greatest pleasure, for Monsieur Beaumarchais was the kindest man and most courteous host in Paris, and mademoiselle was—was—— Ah, well! she was what people in her own position in life would call attractive, and likely to make a good match, but whom such poor devils as you and I, Webb, are content to call beautiful, and to regard as being of a more exalted sphere."

I bowed respectfully to the not very complimentary allusion of my friend, whose lip as he spoke, I was somewhat surprised to see curled with a smile of ineffable scorn; recovering himself, however, he proceeded in his usual tone—

"Perceiving I had gained the good opinion of my employer, I, strove hard by diligence to retain it, and was gratified with the consciousness that my efforts were appreciated by him whose favour I was anxious to conciliate, and——"

"And by *her* whose favour you were anxious to conciliate, eh, Jack?" I interrupted with playful malice.

Jack deigned not to take notice of the interruption, but thus went on—

"The higher, however, I rose in the principal's good graces, and the more I became acquainted with the affairs of the business, the more I was sensible I became an object of distrust and dislike to Jules Lefevre, who regarded me even with the greatest suspicion, and subjected me to many petty annoyances which it was in his power to inflict upon me. In my own mind I have little doubt that this amiable personage exerted his influence to get me dismissed from my situation; for certain the *other* clerks were continually being discharged at his instigation, and it is probable that I only owed my retention to the good position in which I stood with regard to Monsieur Beaumarchais himself.

"I at first attributed this dislike on the part of my superior to a jealousy, that I might surpass him in my knowledge of the affairs of the firm. One of my juniors in position, though my senior in knowledge of the world, undeceived me.

"'Vous croyez qu'il est jaloux?' said he, smiling one day, when I had expressed to him these thoughts. 'Eh, bien! mais il est jaloux pour la belle Leonore!'

"A pang of—of what shall I term it?—of anger; that such a noble and beautiful girl should be sacrificed to such a man, even in thought, shot through my heart, as I imagined I had just discovered the cause of Lefevre's animosity to me. And yet I was conscious that even if that villain (for villain he proved to be) entertained such designs, he could scarcely deem me his rival. No, Webb, I too well knew the difference of my position from that of Mademoiselle Beaumarchais, even to suffer myself to indulge in futile dreams, or—or, at least," added the speaker with

a half-smothered sigh, "to suffer any soul to *perceive* that I dreamed.

"I watched Lefevre more closely, and the more closely I watched him, the more I became assured that any attentions on his part were by no means pleasing to the young lady herself; for she studiously avoided him, and when constrained to be in his presence, appeared ever to be ill at ease.

"It is probable that Lefevre perceived I had made this discovery. Certainly, I attributed his increased animosity towards me to this cause. But afterwards, as you will presently see, I had other reasons, for thinking my senior had too much cause to dislike having a conscientious and intelligent person about him, who made it a point to master the details of all transactions connected with the firm.

"But I must not anticipate. I must tell you, then, that it was one afternoon, a short time ago, that I was seated in the counting-house as usual, with Lefevre at his books by my side. Monsieur Beaumarchais entered the office, a very thoughtful and serious expression upon his face. He went into his little room at the back of ours, after requesting in a few words, which seemed to me to tremble upon his lips, Monsieur Lefevre to follow him.

"The two remained closeted together for an hour. More than once I imagined I could hear the principal exclaiming in an elevated voice, through the closed door.

At length Monsieur Beaumarchais threw open the door, and, without uttering a word, crossed through the office into the street.

But never till my last day shall I forget the look of speechless agony and despair his venerable countenance wore.

"Good heavens, what is the matter?" I demanded of Lefevre, as he quietly resumed his seat by my side.

"A smile—a bitter, demoniacal smile of triumph and of hate writhed his lip, as he merely replied that Monsieur was not quite well that day. He thought he was rather afflicted in the head.

"A few days solved the mystery. Bills to a large amount were presented, and could not be met. The news spread like wildfire over the city, that the hitherto respectable, if small, firm of Verne and Beaumarchais had failed. It was asserted—of course with the usual exaggeration—for at least a million of francs.

"But rumours spread, also, of still more momentous import. It was whispered that large sums of money had been employed by Monsieur Beaumarchais which were the property of his clients—in fact, that Monsieur Beaumarchais was not so much unfortunate as culpable. The creditors, it was said, would institute the strictest inquiries. I waited impatiently for the result. The evening following the collapse, I met Mademoiselle Leonore in the

hall. I bowed, and was about to pass on, when the sight of her face arrested me. She was very pale, and I thought had been weeping. Poor girl! my heart melted with sympathy.

"'How is Monsieur Beaumarchais this evening, mademoiselle?' I said, embarrassed with the emotion in my breast.

"'He is not very well, monsieur. He is in his chamber," she replied in a low tone.

"I was about to make some trivial reply, and to turn away, when the girl softly laid her hand upon my shoulder, and thus detained me.

"'What is this they tell me? Is it true that we—that we are ruined?'

"I could not, for the life of me, that moment frame an answer such as is given conventionally at such times. I turned my head away, and was silent.

"'It is true, then?' she murmured. The next instant her cheek was flushed with a crimson hue.

"'And—and they say that—that my poor father has dishonoured his name?'

"'Then, madame, in that they lie,' I exclaimed, warmly. 'I do not—I will not believe but that your father is all that is noble and true.'

"'You do not, then, believe these reports?'"

"'I do not believe them, upon my honour.'"

"'Thanks, monsieur—thanks!' she cried, taking my hand, but instantly letting it fall again. She was now about to leave me, but she turned again and said:

"'Monsieur, my father is grateful for all the kindness you have shown him; and I—I am grateful, monsieur, also. You will think of us sometimes, will you not? We shall often—oh very often, think of you. Adieu!'

"The last word was uttered after a moment's pause; as the last syllable fell from her lips she ascended the staircase with a light and rapid step.

"I stood a moment speechless with wonder and surprise. When I recovered myself I was quite alone. I have never seen either Monsieur Beaumarchais or his daughter since that night. In the morning it was discovered they had disappeared; how, or when, or whither they had gone, no one could tell.

I shall pass over the scene that followed The flight of the unfortunate gentleman was construed as a sure proof of his conscious guilt. The affairs of the concern were examined minutely, and Lefevre, who had always the management of the books, produced accounts, and gave evidence which confirmed the ill-opinion against the honour of his late employer. There was, however, several books wanting, which I and the other clerks knew to exist,

but which could nowhere be found. Lefevre explained that there were certain of the most important books which Monsieur Beaumarchais kept in his own possession, and insinuated that the banker had most likely either taken them with him or destroyed them, for reasons that were best known to himself.

"It happened, however, that on the very evening before the day on which I was to quit my situation—for, of course, my services were no longer necessary—I had to make some inquiry of Monsieur Lefevre. He was in his private room, and thither I repaired to him.

"I found the door partly open, and entering rather suddenly, I perceived he was going over a book. He glanced up at me, and seemed angry at my intrusion. He closed the book, and pushed it aside. But from the momentary glance I had obtained of the cover, *I felt convinced it was one of the very books which were said to be missing.*

"I, however, kept this fearful discovery to myself. Let it suffice that the same night, during the absence of Lefevre, I visited his chamber, and after an anxious search I discovered the book I had before beheld. Another account-book was in the same place. With both these I stealthily retreated to my own room, my heart throbbing violently as I examined the contents.

"Doubt became certainty. The books were really what I had suspected, and after a brief survey of their pages, I had little doubt that the accounts Lefevre had produced had been "cooked," and that his statements were utterly false from beginning to end. These were, however, but a small portion of those that were wanting. Without them I was conscious I could not legally establish Lefevre's guilt; but, *morally*, I no longer doubted, that he was a villain of the blackest dye.

"To cut a long story short, I made every inquiry to endeavour to discover whither Monsieur Beaumarchais and his daughter had flown, for I thought it not improbable that he might really have some information which, with the proof I had already in my possession, might substantiate the manager's culpability and re-establish his own good name—perhaps recover to him his fortune also.

"Alas! my efforts were to a great extent in vain. I discovered that the fugitives had quitted the continent for England. Thither I followed them immediately, and this is the true reason I am here. I have now told my story, and I shall be glad to have your opinion and advice as to the course I had best pursue. For my part, Heaven knows I am at a loss."

Temple ceased speaking, and I sat silently pondering on the strange story I had heard.

"What has become of Lefevre?" I demanded.

About a month after the failure of the firm, I ascertained he had bought an estate somewhere at the South of France. But I have never seen him since.

Probably he bought it with his ill-gotten gain. However, I will examine your books, and if I can do anything for you, Jack, depend upon it it shall be done.

PART II.

THAT morning I repaired to my chambers, at the Inner Temple, where I was subsequently rejoined by Mr. Jack Temple (to the no little surprise of my small clerk, who evidently took him for such a *rara avis* as a client), who brought with him, from his hotel, the account-books to which allusion has before been made.

A minute examination of these, accompanied with such explanations as Temple was enabled to give, at once brought me to the same opinion as himself—that the firm of Verne and Beaumarchais was not really insolvent, or at least, that it ought not to be so.

"I wish we could find out where this Monsieur Beaumarchais is," I muttered half to myself as I was gazing abstractedly out of the window upon the majestically flowing Thames.

"Ah! so do I wish so," ejaculated my companion with fervour, snatching, as it were, the words from my lips. "Oh, Webb! my dear friend, if I could but be the means of preserving that kind old gentleman, and—and his daughter, I—I could die happy. I shall never forget the look the poor girl gave me the night I saw her last!"

"Very likely not," I returned dryly—for I had my own suspicions whether my friend Jack had such a Platonic regard for abstract justice, as he seemed to say; and whether Mademoiselle Leonore might not, perhaps, have a trifle to do with his anxiety. However, I made no indiscreet remark, but set myself diligently to concoct schemes, only to relinquish them and concoct others, for the furtherence of the object, my old school-fellow appeared to have so much at heart; and in which I must confess I really felt a professional interest on my own part.

One thing we were both of us decidedly agreed upon, viz.—the necessity that we should do our best to ascertain the whereabouts of the unfortunate ex-banker. Unluckily—or, perhaps luckily for a good many—it is not easy in London to make this discovery of a person, when you have no further information to work upon than that he once came to the metropolis; but that

he may now be there, or he may with equal likelihood *not* be there.

The forlorn hope of an advertisement was the only tangible notion that presented itself to the minds of either of us.

Accordingly a brief advertisement was drawn up by Temple in French, entreating "Monsieur E. B. of the firm of V. and B. of Paris, to address himself immediately to T. Webb, Esq., of the Inner Temple. Secresy might be relied upon."

"I'm afraid it will be no use," said my companion dolorously, as he read his production over to me. "He is not very likely to see it, and even if he does, he is still less likely to respond to it."

The ancient clock of the Temple struck four, as I and my client (after giving the customary instructions to the youth on the stool) quitted the precincts of the venerable place.

We bent our course towards Printing House Square, and wending along the alleys which lead to the natal place of the mighty thunderer, paid the requisite fee for the insertion of our notice, and received the receipt. "If this fails, then I know not what is to be done," I observed as we turned away.

Chance—if there be such a being—brought about the end which our advertisement and puzzled wits would probably have failed to have done.

Those persons even who are racked by the most anxious hopes and fears, and who are bent upon the most important matters, are all liable, as much as the most commonplace clodhopper, to the ordinary lot of man to be *hungry*; and by the time we had thus far accomplished our mission we became painfully sensible that we also were human in this respect. In short, we entered a dining-house, and quickly fell upon our most important daily meal.

Now, it happened all at once, that as Temple was rattling on in his own lively way he suddenly came to a dead halt in the very middle of his elocution.

I glanced upwards in extreme astonishment, and remarked that the speaker's countenance was of a deathly paleness, and that his hands, as they clutched the knife and fork, were trembling violently.

My first thought was that the poor young man had choked himself, and it is not impossible that I should have presently began to pat him on his back to set him to rights again. He, however, extended his hand towards a quiet-looking gentleman who was reading the paper at the further extremity of the room, and caused me to change my opinion that he was being suffocated into the no less terrible one that he was losing his wits.

"Good gracious, my dear fellow! what is it you mean?" I ejaculated, in dismay.

"Do you see that man yonder?" Temple whispered, in an earnest voice, and with a manner that showed he was at least *in compos mentis*.

"Well, what of him?"

"As I am a living man, Tom, he is Jules Lefevre, and no other man!" was Temple's emphatic reply.

These words caused me to be affected little less powerfully than my friend had been. A quick glance at the stranger satisfied me that he certainly corresponded with the description that Temple had given of him.

"Lefevre in England!" I muttered audibly. "What can he be doing here?"

"No good, depend upon it," Temple groaned.

"Jack, we will find out at least where he goes to; perhaps we may come across something more," I cried, decisively, having reflected quickly. "He has not yet observed you; take care that he does not. Slip out of the door quietly; I will settle the bill, and rejoin you. We will watch till he comes out, and then we will follow him. I hail this, *mon ami*, as an omen of success.

Our plans were executed almost as speedily as explained. We crept over to the further side of the street, whence we could command a full view of the door through which we had just emerged, and through which Lefevre must emerge also.

We had not been waiting very long when the object of our watch made his appearance, and directed his course, at a brisk rate, towards the Strand; I and Temple following at a distance sufficient to prevent us being observed, should our quarry turn and look behind him, but sufficiently near also as to keep him ever in view.

In the Strand he hailed a cab, into which he entered.

"Now for it, then, or the beggar will give us the slip," I exclaimed, fully resolved that he should *not* give us the slip if I could possibly help it.

A "handsom" was luckily passing by at that very nick of time. A few seconds served for me to spring into it, Temple full of excitement, following suit.

"You see that cab a hundred yards ahead?" I cried to the driver, who nodded his head, assenting.

"Well, follow it, my man, so that we are not *seen* to follow it. Perform the matter skilfully, and you may count on double fare; do you understand?"

The cabby said "all right," and winked as much as to say he thought he did understand,—particularly that part of my remark

which came last—touched his horse with the whip, and in very much less time than it has occupied me in recounting it, we were dashing along in the wake of the unconscious ex-manager of the Paris bank.

Out of the Strand, the vehicle conveying the latter turned northwards, we pursuing at the respectable distance of a hundred or so paces. On, on, through many a street and across many a road, our driver, who appeared to be quite used to the present sort of game—as very probably he was—ever kept the fugitive in view. At last, a quarter of an hour being thus spent, the foremost cab drew up at the corner of a quiet and secluded street, which I inferred from the direction in which we had come—though I knew little of the neighbourhood—must be somewhere in the vicinity of Kentish Town.

Simultaneously we stooped also, and bidding the cabman wait, in case we should again require him, we unobserved, still watched the person whom Temple insisted, even more vehemently than at first, was Lefevre, until the latter knocked at a door about midway down the street, and who, presently, after apparently holding some confabulation with the individual who opened the door to him, turned away.

"Let us still follow him, Jack," I said. "As we have traced him thus far, we will not relinquish the trail till we have followed it to the end. But even if we can discover nothing more, one important link at all events has been obtained."

Accordingly, we hastened after Lefevre, who evidently intended to quit the street at the opposite extremity to the one whereby he had entered it. In distance, he thus had much the advantage of us. By the time we arrived at the corner round which he had disappeared, not a vestige of him could be seen. Something resembling a malediction fell from my comrade's lips.

"Never mind," said I, consolingly, "we will make the best use of the knowledge we have already gained,—it may lead to more than we should possibly obtain, even if we were able to continue the pursuit."

And linking my arm in that of my agitated friend, I caused him to retrace his steps.

"What on earth are you going to say?" he ejaculated, as I very composedly gave a double rat-tat at the door of the house to which we had before seen Lefevre apply himself.

"Only to ask if somebody lives here, who of course does not live here," I returned laughing.

The door was presently opened by a little female eccentricity, who might have sate Dickens's famous marchioness, had she not obviously made her first appearance in the world years after the

marchioness had been drawn. Of her I inquired if there were such a person as Mr. John Temple living there? of course, receiving a negative reply.

"Oh! he doesn't live here, doesn't he? Well never mind. I say, my little maid, do you know what this is, eh?" And as I spoke I held up a bright new shilling before the sparkling eyes f the damsel, who said, curtseying profoundly. "Yes, sir, please."

"Well, if you will answer my questions it shall be yours—to keep!" I added, observing she evidently received the tempting assurance with considerable doubt.

Whereupon she again said, "Yes, sir, please," and curtsied yet more profoundly than before.

"In the first place, then, who was that gentleman, who came here, just a few minutes ago?"

"Dunno, sir," said the child. "Please, sir, he didn't leave no name."

"But what did he come here for? whom did he want to see?"

"Please, sir, he wanted to see Mr. Smith, the old gentleman as lodges here, sir, or leastways Miss Smith."

"An old gentleman, you say?"

"Yes, sir, and a young lady, sir, as comes from forrin' parts; and oh lor', sir, she *do* sing beautiful; and—and here they come now, sir."

Poor Jack received the announced with a gulp that made me almost think he was about to bring his heart up; indeed, I felt my heart beating with uncommon violence, as, on glancing over my shoulder, I beheld an old gentleman with a young girl of exquisite beauty, hanging affectionately on his arm.

"Monsieur Beaumarchais! mon ami—mon chére ami!" cried Temple, seizing the old gentleman by the hand.

The young lady gave a little scream, but said nothing at all.

"Temple? Temple! mon bon ami! Quelle merveille! mon fils!" cried Monsieur Beaumarchais, almost ready to dance with delight, almost ready to weep with joy.

"Que je suis heareux," sobbed poor Jack.

"Et moi aussi!" ejaculated his rampant friend. "Allons mes amis! Tenez, ma fille! Je rendre remerciements a Dieu, que j'ai un vrai ami encore!"

And the old French banker, vanquished by his emotions, led the way into the house, almost dragging the not-unwilling Jack with him by the hand.

The idea at this interesting juncture struck me, that though, as a legal adviser, I might be very useful to my friend, yet on the present occasion the probability was, that both he and Monsieur

Beaumarchais as well as Mademoiselle Leonore, would have other things to occupy their attention, more engrossing, perhaps, than dry legal discourse, and to their conversation upon which the presence of a third was by no means desirable.

"Jack," said I, giving my lately desponding friend a hasty shake of the hand. "I have just remembered that I have a little business to attend to this evening. Come and let me know how you get on as soon as you can spare the time; and—and as soon as Mademoiselle Leonore can spare *you*, you dog!"

And away I went to the cab which had fortunately been waiting for me.

Next morning, soon after I had ensconced myself behind my desk at my chambers, in order that I might be prepared to take up a quill, and drive away with exemplary industry if anybody came, or that I might peruse the *Times*, which lay by my side, if anybody did *not* come—which was far more likely of the two—my youth pompously announced the advent of Mr. Temple; and Mr. Temple, looking quite buoyant and high-spirited, and bearing in his arms an immense pile of books, instantly followed the announcement.

"There they are, then!" he exclaimed, hurling the aforesaid pile of tomes upon the floor at my feet.

"There they are!" I repeated in astonishment. "There what are, for goodness sake? What are all these books about? What do you bring them here for? I say, Jack Temple, my friend, I'm afraid Mademoiselle Leonore has driven you quite out of your wits!"

"Psha! don't be silly, there's a good fellow, don't," cried Jack, blushing up to the eyes. "There are the missing books of Verne and Beaumarchais—hem! hem! I—I say, Tom, *isn't* she lovely, though?"

"Lovely? What, the books?" I returned, maliciously, pretending not to comprehend.

"The books? No, curse the books! You know very well what I mean, Tom. I mean Mademoiselle Leonore—*la belle—la charmante* Leonore."

"Well, I must confess that I—I think her rather pretty; she is, perhaps, a trifle too tall."

"Too tall! *ma foi;* not an inch, Tom! Tall! why sir, it is that which makes her so magnificent. She is a goddess! She is glorious!"

"Upon my word, Mr. Temple, you seem to have been making rapid progress with your goddess, somehow. I heard nothing of all this yesterday. At all events, I must candidly congratulate you upon your success, and I heartily hope that you will make *la belle* Leonore—*la charmante*——"

"There you go on again, Tom! I wish you wouldn't be so ridiculous. Mademoiselle Beaumarchais is nothing in the world to me."

And the speaker, albeit his cheeks were crimson, sighed pathetically, and assumed an air of the greatest unconsciousness in the world.

"Never mind, Jack," I said, soothingly. "We will leave these tender sentiments alone for the present; meanwhile, we will get to business. Tell me, first, how you secured all these account-books, and what calls Monsieur Lefevre to have such close intercourse with his former patron. I confess it puzzles me extremely, nor does it seem to agree with our suspicions of him."

"Aye, but by heavens it does, though! as you will hear," Jack interrupted, thumping the table with an emphatic bang.

Temple then related the following facts—not precisely, perhaps, in the words in which I have recorded them, as they were interspersed with many digressions and explanations on his part, and many cross-questions on mine, which would only be tedious to recapitulate in detail. But though I may have somewhat altered the language, the subject-matter had been scrupulously expressed.

"You must know, then," said he, "that I have ascertained my suspicions of that fellow's intentions towards Mademoiselle Beaumacrhais to be true. It appears that for a long period before the break up of the firm, that the rascal had been paying his addresses to Leonore, for he had gained the promise of her father to give his permission to the marriage, providing Leonore's assent could be obtained. A villain! a rogue!—as though so fair a being as Leonore could bind herself to such a wretch! It was not to be expected, Tom Webb. She scouted his advances with scorn."

"Of course," Tom Webb interrupted, sententiously. "It was not to be expected, especially when a certain gentleman whose name I could mention was in the field. However, never mind that. Get on with thy story, man, and let us hear the end on't." Whereupon my companion thus went on:

"A few days before the climax, however, Jules Lefevre took occasion to meet the poor girl, and to endeavour to work upon her feelings. He told her that her father was at the brink of ruin. That no one but he could save him, and that he would exert his power to save him only upon condition that she would consent to become his bride, adding, with heartless brutality, that her father's happiness or destruction was in her own hands.

"At first the poor girl besought him to be merciful. She told him candidly that she could never be happy as his wife,—that

she could only contemplate a union with him with terror. Finding him inflexible, she—as he deserved—defied him. She informed him that she was certain her father would not desire her to sacrifice her happiness by a marriage with a man whom she could not but despise, and that for her part, she would rather perish than consent to it.

"Foiled in his attempt to work upon her fears, he next sought out Monsieur Beaumarchais himself. On the day when he acquainted the latter with the fearful condition of his financial affairs, he told him that he—that is to say, Lefevre—had recently come into a considerable fortune, which was at the disposal of Monsieur Beaumarchais, on condition of his inducing his daughter to become his wife.

"At this, the miserable banker flew into a violent passion, and vowed he would suffer ruin, poverty, and every degradation, and even death itself, rather than he would in any way force the choice of his darling child.

"It is singular that he should never have suspected Lefevre to be the author of his misfortunes; but it appears that he never did.

"Lefevre was not, however, daunted yet. On the very day the house stopped payment, he again accosted his unfortunate principal, and with a coolness and determination worthy of the arch-fiend himself, observed that what he had prognosticated about the insolvency of the firm had now proved itself too true, although the other had not been aware of it until he (Lefevre) had informed him of it. He added that he had documents in his possession which if produced would prove the unhappy banker criminal, and he vowed that he *would* produce them in default of Mademoiselle Beaumarchais becoming his bride in four-and-twenty hours.

"Monsieur Beaumarchais already borne down with his misfortunes, of which he—having trusted the management of his business almost entirely in the hands of Lefevre—had been totally ignorant until the very moment of the crash, was terrified beyond measure by this latter threat.

"Now, for the first time he suspected the villainy of his chief clerk—the man whom he had trusted and esteemed before all men! But could he prove the villany? Certainly not; or at least, if he could prove it, in his distracted state no means of so doing presented itself to the unhappy man.

"Lefevre had threatened him with ruin, and ruin had come. He had threatened him now with what was more odious than ruin,—punishment and disgrace for crimes, of which his conscious innocence availed him little. Might not this threat be accomplished also. If he whom he had believed to be the personification of

honour would descend to one crime to bring about an end, it was but little likely he would hesitate at another.

To be brief, such was the alarm of Monsieur Beaumarchais, that the same night, accompanied with his daughter, and taking with him only his valuables, and such money as he had at hand, and his private account books and papers, he fled from Paris; nor did he rest until, under the assumed name of 'Smith' (which he thought would make inquisitive persons at once take him for English), he had secured a remote retreat in suburban London.

"It seems, however, that Lefevre had not been sleeping. He became aware of the flight of his victims. Probably, he had no wish to carry out his threat against Monsieur Beaumarchais. Perhaps it would have been perilous for him to have attempte d it or certain, he must have set a spy to watch the fugitives to England; for about a month ago, he himself appeared before his startled victims, and once again renewed his insulting overtures, which of course, were still resolutely rejected.

"Not discomfited in the least degree, Lefevre quietly replied, that he was vexed his good friends had not yet come to a state of sufficient wisdom to distinguish what was best for them; but that he nevertheless did not despair! Poverty would doubtless bring, excellent logic in its train, and that he should certainly avail himself again of the pleasure of calling upon them at some future time.

"Last night," continued Temple, who had been pacing the room furiously during the latter part of his explanation, "the rascal must have come to fulfil his promise. Thank Heaven he did—for through his having done so we have discovered my poor friends, whose happiness is to me—aye, hang it, Webb! you may grin if you like, I don't care—but whose happiness is to me a thousand times more precious than my own."

Temple, having ceased speaking, we both of us presently fell to work vigorously upon the books which he had brought with him, and which Monsieur Beaumarchais had so providentially secured before his flight.

One assertion that Lefevre had made—viz., that Monsieur Beaumarchais had certain important account-books of the firm in his keeping—turned out to be a true one; and these, after a very brief examination, proved also to be the very books.

We sat up half the night in our investigations, and the discoveries we made, coupled with the evidence contained in the books, which Temple had obtained from Lefevre at Paris, made out an extremely clear case against the latter, who must have been carrying on an ingenious system of forgery for a period of three or four years at the very least, by which means sums of

money to a large extent had been lost by the firm, and which he had no doubt appropriated for himself, and he, having undisputed control in the management, had in some manner cleverly contrived to elude detection in his accounts.

The following day, I had an interview with Monsieur Beaumarchais, whom I found to be in kindness and courtesy fully up to my friend's description of him, and the fair Leonore—making all allowances for a lover's extravagance—was perhaps equally so.

Not to detain the reader with a recapitulation of uninteresting legal technicalities, I may briefly state that, as Monsieur Beaumarchais's agent, I crossed the channel, placed all the evidence I had collected in the hands of an eminent advocate whom I had secured to conduct the case, and who so fully substantiated the criminality of Lefevre before a French tribunal of justice, that the latter was compelled to disgorge his ill-gotten wealth, and to expiate his crimes at the galleys.

The affair caused a prodigious excitement at the time. The French Press teemed with sensational articles, especially *L'Opinion Nationale,* which had no less than three slashing leaders upon the affair, lashing the culprit unmercifully, and eulogising in high terms the faithful young "Anglais," who had so perseveringly devoted himself to elucidate the evidence of his master's innocence; nor did the worthy editor forget to add a few words of praise for "un certain ami du fidele Anglais, qui demeure à la Temple de Londres, and who—but no, I am not conceited, so I will say no more.

Monsieur Beaumarchais was restored to position and wealth. The banking firm of Verne and Beaumarchais was defunct, it is true; but this was no reason why another firm under another title should not be established forthwith in its place. This, in fact, was done, under the title of Beaumarchais and Temple, and I am happy to add that the heads of the new firm, in addition to being bound together by the ties of mutual gratitude and affection, are at the present moment about to be joined still closer together by the union in marriage of Monsieur Temple with "la charmante Leonore."

VANDERDECKEN'S DOOM:

A STORY IN VERSE, FOUNDED ON "THE FLYING DUTCHMAN."

ARGUMENT.

Cornelius Vanderdecken, a dutch sea-captain, on a voyage from Amsterdam o the East Indies, was prevented from entering Table Bay by stress of weather. In his anger he swore that he would enter the Bay even if Heaven and Hell should conspire to prevent him. For this impious saying he was ndemned to remain alive till the Last Day, continually trying to redeem is oath, but invariably prevented by supernatural means.

CANTO I.

A HUNDRED years ago and more,
I gaily left the well-known shore
Where dwelt my wife and children dear;
The boat was manned, the vessel near—
I gained the side—a last adieu,
The harbour faded from my view,
And flying fast before the wind,
Home, wife and friends, we left behind.
T'was Friday, that ill-omened day,
When sea-born superstitions say
Ill-luck attends the seamen stout,
Who unawares to sea put out.
And as I paced my vessel's deck,
My wife, too, hung around my neck;
Last night when sleeping on her bed,
She'd had an awful dream, she said,
Of vessels tossed upon the wave
That none might rescue, nought could save,
Of hideous and unusual forms,
Of wrecks and breakers, rocks and storms;
Of one who, cursed by Heaven's command,
Might never more return to land.
She tried to view his face—when flashed
The lightning, and the thunder crashed,
Around—and when she woke,
All this had vanished, like the smoke
That burning weeds in Autumn make.
"Dear Vanderdecken! for my sake,"
She cried, "these ventures undertake
No more! nor on the ocean roam;
But rest in peace with me at home."
Then to her breast her children drew,
And waved a loving, long adieu.

Alas! I little thought that then
I saw her for the last time, when
I left the port of Amsterdam, to make
One closing voyage for her sake.
O wretched man! in blindness e'er
He contemplates the coming year,
And toiling on can ne'er descry,
The workings of futurity—
And thus our lives! the work of years,
One cruel moment may destroy,
And leave but unavailing tears
Our future history to employ.
Through weary hours, by pain possessed,
Beneath a load of care we bend,
And seek in vain a sense of rest,
To toil and tremble to the end.
With troubled minds and lab'ring breath,
He scarce can gain the wished-for prize,
When all our labour ends in death,
And slumber seals our weary eyes;
As when some lover fondly true,
Seeks heaven in his sweetheart's eyes,
And even finds some meaning new,
Within their lambent mysteries.
Then, while his heart beats strong and fast,
He clasps his darling in his arms,
And thinks that tender joy can last,
And soothes her anxious sweet alarms.
Oh! who so happy then as he,
For love his life! his world! his all!
He cares nor thinks of what may be,
Of what misfortunes may befall,
When sudden comes a dreadful day,
An angel stern, an awful dread.
He dreams! and hears compassion say,
Alas! 'tis death, your love hath fled.
Then pale the lips he once could press,
All helpless lie those loving arms,
Then heavy hangs each golden tress,
And fade those pure untutored charms.
Oh! then what wakening dire is his,
And strange that pain like thus can be,
For grief and bitter memories
Fill all his heart with agony;
Until the troubled soul, in vain
Remembers all, and then at last,
Cries wildly, filled with utmost pain,
O Great Creator! give me back the Past.

. . . . .

Bound for the China seas, we thought
Our cargo would be gladly bought,
And then with spices, sugar, and the like,
We hoped a bargain good to strike,
And safely home return again.
What dreary years of toil and pain,
Lay then before us! could I dream
A cruise that did so prosperous seem,
Would end in torments worse than those
That priests would tell us wait the close
Of ill-spent lives, of Heaven defied,
Of those who do their Lord deride.
Careless I was, but yet I could
In quiet moments, feel a good
And softened feeling at my heart.
O love that I could ever part
From such desires, and wretched find,
How unavailing is the mind,
That boasted comforter! when all
Our evil actions loudly call,
Remorse seems worse than death.
Than death! oh! God, my faltering breath,
I know of tortures worse than death!
A living death, a death in life,
An endless unavailing strife
With Him who rules the heaving wave,
In vain one moment's rest to crave,
Through calm and tempest still—but I
Anticipate; The morning sky,
Was bright and glorious, when from port,
The restless main our vessel sought.
Soft rosy clouds, with purple lined,
The Eastern sky full well defined,
Such glories did the sunrise hold,
The very waves themselves were gold.
For weeks we sailed the boundless sea,
That symbol of eternity;
For weeks each sail was full, above,
The constant winds the vessel drove;
So pleasant seemed our voyage gay,
My short-lived fears had passed away.
But now the stormy Cape we neared,
That irksome spot full well we feared;
For many a barque an ocean tomb
Has there befel, a sudden doom,
Brave hearts, and many there repose;
Above their heads the ocean flows,
And deep in dark obscurity

Their sleeping forms for ever lie,
Till now their very names are cast
To swell the dim unthought-of past.

. . . .

We scarce could make the treacherous shore,
When loud we heard the tempest roar;
Each sail we furl'd, until at last
One close-reefed topsail braved the blast.
Oh, thrice accursed be the day
I strove to enter Table Bay!
Once, twice, and still for days in vain,
We tried the wished-for port to gain,
Until, alas! in evil hour
I viewed the mocking land, and swore
That neither Heaven nor Hell should stay
My entering that ill-omened bay.
'Twas done—the desperate vow was said!
Then loud re-echoed overhead,
Through all the fury of the gale,
Strange warning words my ears assail.
"Rash man, by raging passion led,
Those words by thee in anger said
Have fixed thy just and awful doom!
The sea shall form thy living tomb.
Here for long years to come, in vain
For thee the wished-for port to gain,
Until a day on earth appears
Which ends at once thy hopes and fears."
Then ceased the voice—the seamen brave,
Filled with distress, with doubt dismayed,
Came round their wretched captain, who
No more his purpose could pursue;
Then, gaining vigour, all the crew
At once to trim the braces flew,
Till soon the vessel felt the strain,
And headed t'wards the land again.

CANTO II.

When eve is come, with lengthened ray,
Slowly declines the orb of day,
The flaming globe, an angry red,
Sinks slowly to his ocean bed.
The furious seamen, filled with rage,
Now in a desperate scheme engage,
And, bent the hoped-for land to reach,
Resolve the stubborn ship to beach.

Then looms afar a headland grey,
Seen fitful through the driving spray ;
And as we near the rocky shore,
With thundering sound the breakers roar,
They rush toward the curving strand,
And swift invade the solid land.
Hurled from the rock, with fierce rebound,
They break with dreadful crash of sound ;
So fly to sheets of whitened spray,
Then, falling, meet and flee away.
The welcome shore the vessel nears,
Closer each friendly face appears ;
But now a terror marks the scene,
Such as before had never been !
The people, while their faces change,
See, with dismay, the vessel strange—
The high-cut poop, the gilded rails,
The curious rig, the thread-bare sails ;
And deem some fearful thing must be,
When such unlooked-for signs they see,
For while with us had passed a day,
Full seventy years had rolled away ;
Our wives and children long were dead,
Our very homes themselves had fled.

. . . . . .

Then shook the sails, to now restrain
That fated vessel were in vain ;
One moment hanging in the wind,
The sails against the topmast bind,
Then fill, the pond'rous yards swing round,
With loud, continuous, din of sound !
And soon, within the gathering mist,
The people, who would fain assist
To save, are lost ! for seaward now,
The ship, enchanted, turns her prow,
Then, flying from the furious gale,
To farthest seas remote we sail.
Now, what reproaches meet my ear,
In this unholy hour of fear,
The piteous outcries of the crew,
Who vainly, now, their voyage rue ;
No more shall they, with jovial cheer.
Return to meet their children dear ;
Nor furl the sails, in harbour brought,
Nor find the rest, so hardly wrought ;
But tossing on the troubled main,
To hear the wind's complaining strain,
And fancy, in the salt sea-foam

They see the faces left at home.
Oh! Who shall know the awful hours,
The torment, which my soul devours,
The bitter and profound remorse
I feel, as on our restless course,
Unknown to good, unchecked by ill,
We press for ever onward, still.
Repentance, now, may ne'er avail,
Far through deserted seas we sail—
Long tracks of ocean, where the sky
Re-echoes back no sea-bird's cry—
Where rolling miles of restless waves
Seem hollows, in a land of graves.
Unbounded solitudes! where silence drear
Endures from day to day, from year to year;
Save from the thunder's sound, the tempest's rage,
The battles that the storm-winds wage.
Dawn follows dawn, with rosy ray,
Unclouded glow the beams of day,
Vast pictures, which no human eye
Save ours, perhaps, shall e'er descry;
Eve follows eve—the haunted night,
Brings visions of a vast affright.
Sometimes, when on the ocean's dim
And vast horizon's rounded rim,
In seas well-known, with glad delight,
We mark a tiny speck of white,
And make all sail, with fiery haste,
The maddened vessel spurns the waste.
In vain such hopes, such agony,
For all impalpable are we;
We pass them by, we leave the spot,
Alas! they hail, they see us not.
Thus in the changing years our barque
Sails onward on the ocean dark,
In storm or silence, calm or wind,
No rest our troubled spirits find;
But still we view the far-off shore,
And still we sail for evermore,
Until that last and awful day,
When Heaven and Earth shall pass away.

FRANCIS H. HEMERY.

THE MILLER OF EAMONT BRIDGE:

A WESTMORELAND TALE OF THE LAST CENTURY.

BY MRS. HIBBERT WARE,

Authoress of "Dr. Harcourt's Assistant," "The Hunlock Title Deeds," "The Water Tower," &c.

CHAPTER IV.—*Continued.*

"I'm right glad to see you all," said Atkinson, shaking hands. "Are you coming down to the farm? Who are those two yonder?"

"The Captain," replied Margaret, rather proudly, and emphasising the title, "and Miss Cheney. Eyh, we got the news yesterday who was to hev the command of the 'Bonny Betty,' and reet glad we were to hear on't. Miss Cheney will be well pleased, I'se warrant; they'll make a bonny pair; Maister Richard is as handsome a lad as is in 'aw the county, for all Mistress Gurnett ca's him 'owd red head.' He wasn't smitten wi' her full blown charms, that's it; and as for Miss Helen, she has gotten her father's good looks and his quality bearing. Eyh, but he's a fine old man, Mr. John; 'tis a pity Yack Gurnett should ha' gotten seck a grip, as folk say he has, and the bits of land, that's all he has left, in the place where the Cheney's were great people years ago. The poor old gentleman," continued the farmer, as they paused at the top of a hill, and looked down upon a truly lonely scene, where, amidst valley and stream, wooded banks and green pasture fields seeming to spring up by magic from amongst the bare bleak hills, arose, in sad and fallen grandeur, the ruins of Shap Abbey.

"You see, learning's very good, and I've a great respect for it; but it won't find meat and drink."

"But, then, Mr. Atkinson," said Margaret, enthusiastically "scholars have the honour and the glory of their genius, and doesn't that count for something?"

"Eyh, varra true, Miss Margaret; but honour and glory don't bring much comfort, I reckon, when the larder is empty, and they won't put clothes on folk's backs. I've known the Cheneys through your mother a many years, now, and it vexes me to think how seck a man as the miller should have Ralph Cheney under his thumb, and be a gentleman come of such forbears. If a' folks say be true, his affairs are in a bad way."

"I'm afraid Mr. Cheney's affairs are in a worse way than we imagined," observed John Clifton, gravely. "I suppose you

hear a good deal at Penrith, when you go to market? Poor Helen, it must be an anxious life for her. We'll say nowt about the matter before my brother, Atkinson, for he would feel it more, leaving her just at this time. My mother and I will keep a sharp look out; but Mr. Cheney's in bad hands, we know that, between Yack Gurnett and that knavish lawyer, Sump Willis."

"He couldn't be in worse, unless Satin himself had his claws on him," remarked the farmer; "and to think of the poor old gentleman taking matters so easily as he does! Poring over his books, and never thinking of his own future or his child's. A while ago, when he was over here, I tried to set him on to talk a bit about his bit of land, for I wanted to warn him against that cunning de'il of a lawyer; but his mind was running on other things, and I couldn't bring him to the point. He was thinking a deal more of the old monks that were turned out of the abbey and of them broken in. As for the monks, poor ow'd men, them's dead and buried long ago, and there's an end on't; but Mr. Cheney, he can talk o' nobbat else, and grope about amongst these old stones to give himself rheumatics, and fall out wi' me and my landlord, for robbing the ruins, as he says, to make some o' the farm buildings. And for why shouldn't one make use o' things that's doing nobody no good?"

"Haven't you forgiven my father yet, Mr. Atkinson?" asked Miss Cheney, who had just come up with the Captain, as the farmer finished his last remarks.

"To be sure I have, miss; I wa'd never bear malice; but you maun confess Mr. Cheney did call me some hard names; and, after all, 'tis the landlord who's most to blame."

By this time the little party had begun to descend the green hill-side, sloping down to the valley in which stands all that remains of Shap Abbey.

We must look back many ages for the foundation of this once noble pile. Here, amongst these bleak moors and dreary fells, the austere Premonstratensian monks, or White Canons, as they were called by our ancestors, laid the first stones of their monastery in the twelfth century. Norman favour enriched the Abbey and furthered the efforts of its first founders; for Robert de Vipont, crusader, judge, and scholar, sheriff of Caen, in Normandy, and custodian of Windsor Castle, a man high in favour with his sovereign, King John, and of great power and rank, smiled on the new foundation, and became a great benefactor to the monks, who came to people this dreary, barren solitude.

For many centuries, wind and storm swept over the old Abbey and yet it stood scatheless and uninjured. The monks sang their matins and vespers, and peace and rest were theirs, whilst revolu-

tions and tumults convulsed the land: but at last came the time when the Abbey, in its turn, should suffer violence. The Reformation sounded its funeral knell, and what wind and storm and the wear and tear of centuries had spared, fell beneath the relentless and savage zeal of the early reformers. Imbued with all her father's love and reverence for these noble relics of past ages, Helen Cheney never visited the ruins without a feeling of mournful sadness at the contemplation of their fallen and decayed grandeur. Her companions on this morning hardly shared her feelings, save and excepting the Captain, who was so much in love that his countenance was a reflection of hers, in a way: if she looked sad his honest face was overclouded; did she smile, then was he all joy.

John had little appreciation for antiquity, his sisters had still less; they knew that monks had lived at Shap Abbey, and that they had been driven forth, and their monastery pulled to pieces, and that now it was a confused mass of scattered fragments of stone, all of which looked much alike to the young ladies, though Mr. Cheney had so many various names for them.

But Helen knew the history of the Abbey, and would sit on a fallen capital or remnant of a wall, and talk of mitred abbots and then of architecture, of quaint corbel heads and broken shafts with floriated capitals, to the great edification of Richard Clifton, and the wonderment of honest James Atkinson, if he chanced to be by.

On descending the hill, Helen paused with her friends on the banks of the Lowther, a stream running through the valley, between thickly-wooded banks, where once flourished a noble forest. Of all the trees none are finer than the hawthorns, some growing in thicker clumps, others scattered about on the level or rising ground, their dark, shining foliage standing out in bold relief against the green pasture fields, or the deep blue sky, and their outlines soft and beautiful, no ragged bare branches, but bowers of glassy leaves, fine old trunks that had grown into that stately maturity during the lapse of a hundred years and more.

The trees that fringe the banks of the Lowther grow so close that their branches meet and form arches of foliage over the stream, rushing beneath, leaping over huge boulder stones, partly moss-grown, and eddying in flakes of foam about their base. Through an opening in the thick foliage a wide ray of sunlight fell on the dark waters and the huge boulder stones, till a passing breeze stirred the leaves, and the broad sunbeam, chequered and broken, fell in little quivering flashes of gold on the swift flowing stream, so limpid and clear, that as Helen Cheney leant over the old stone bridge leading to the ruins she could have counted the yellow pebbles in its bed.

Up the banks the changing foliage of the sycamore and willow, just growing yellow with autumn tints, mingled with the shining leaves of the hawthorns, and the ash drooped its graceful branches so low that the long slender leaves swept the surface of the stream.

Leaving the bridge, and passing through a gate, Helen and the Captain, now the first of the group, after traversing a few yards, paused in front of the ruins of the lofty tower of the church, the only part left standing of the once extensive Abbey of Shap, admiring the grandeur of its deeply-recessed Gothic doorway, with its succession of shafts and mouldings. Beyond this tower lay scattered fragments of stone, moss-grown and half-hidden by the long high grass, shattered pillars, bits of boldly ornamented arch-mouldings, ruined walls, pieces of scrolls, and stones exhibiting traces of beautiful carving, and here and there a flat gravestone slab, one with the outline of a crosier upon it, marking the last resting-place of some mitred abbot.

Here, under the shadow of the roofless tower, all that remains of their once beautiful Abbey, the dust of the monks mingles with mother earth, while their beloved monastery has for centuries been a ruin, and the only relics left unchanged from those far-off days are the bare, rugged hills that tower above the valley, and the rippling stream, whose wooded banks re-echoed the voices of the monks as they chanted the Vesper hymn.

After a few minutes' conversation, Atkinson left the Cliftons and Miss Cheney to inform his wife of the arrival of visitors, and the latter, picking their way over the fragments of stone, loitered about amongst the ruins.

"I have noticed myself, and my father has pointed it out to me," observed Helen, "how prudent the monks of old were in always choosing a site for their monasteries where there was some running stream close by; you see here they had the Lowther."

"Very true," replied John, with an air of lurking mischief on his face, stepping out of a vault, the regular though rough masonry of which was even yet very perfect, but the jolly old monks liked something better than water, and I suspect there's many a bin of the sack your father speaks of stored in this cellar."

"Eyh, to be sure," chimed in Atkinson, who had just joined the party; "the monks liked good living, by all accounts."

"Well, if they did, they were open-handed," answered Helen, rather tartly, to the amusement of John, who had only been speaking in raillery; "they never turned the poor away from their doors, as workhouse officials do. You are an overseer, Mr. Atkinson, and I dare say all you parish officers like your good dinners as well as ever the monks did; but I doubt if you are such fathers of

the poor as they were. Charity dispensed from the doors of Shap Abbey was not the cold, hard, pitiful thing we call by that name, now, and which we leave to be dealt out by the overseer."

"There, Mr. Atkinson, you've caught it!" said John, laughing.

"Oh, I've gotten used to hard words fro' Mr. Cheney, and they break no banes," replied the farmer, with a comical smile and a shrug of his shoulders.

Helen joined in the general laugh, which was increased, a moment afterwards, by an answer of Atkinson's in reply to a remark made by Bessy about a fragment of stone which had attracted her notice by the beautiful foliated carving on it.

"Eyh, Miss Bessy, Mr. Cheney was busy making drawings of them kind o' things the last time he was here; he ca's them crochets."

"Nay, Mr. Atkinson, it's a crocket," said Helen.

"Well, crocket or crocket, there's sma' difference 'twixt one word and t'other, Miss Helen. However, we'll just step into the house, and while you ladies rest there, Mr. John and I we'll see if we can't 'tice some trouts fro' the Lowther. It's no use asking the Captain to go with us; I reckon he's in better company."

The Captain appeared fully to coincide with this last remark, and the whole party retired to the farm-house, a substantially built building of grey stone, lying close to the ruins—under their very shadow, indeed.

Over the front door there was affixed a stone corbel, a spoil from the ruins, and Atkinson paused before they entered the strip of flower garden in front of the house, and said:

"Eyh, Miss Cheney, but whenever I look at you head wi' its comical, grinning face, I hev a hearty laugh over your father and the foot-pad."

"Why, what was that?" asked Helen in some surprise.

"He has never told you, then? but to be sure you were a bit, lassie when it happened, and he'll, perhaps, hev forgotten it. 'Twas one time he had been here poking about the whole day among the ruins, and whiles I knew he wad carry off bits of stone and sech-like — but I never let on I knew it, for I thought 'twas nae robbery, that. A weel 'twas late when he started to walk to Shap, and just at the loveliest part o' the road a foot-pad leapt out on him. Now, Mr. Cheney had nowt to speak of, as he told me afterwards, in his purse, but he had gotten in his hand a bit of a bag, and the foot-pad thought for sure 'twas a bag of gold, the more as Mr. Cheney fought desperately to keep it safe; so there they was a-pulling and a-tearing at the old bag, and a striving which should get it, when at last it got rippled open, and, my

sakes, out there tumbles one of them queer stone faces, which so startled the thief, that he said something very naughty about your father's eyes, and took to his heels."

CHAPTER V.

A COLD RECEPTION.

THE back part of the mill and the dwelling-house attached to it looked out upon the river, and the latter, indeed, was only divided from the water's edge by a patch of garden, thickly planted on either side with tall fir-trees, and enclosed by a high, thick hedge of holly. This part of the house was thus completely secluded from all observation, even had any of the Eamont Bridge people been found bold enough to pry about Yack Gurnett's premises; and here, in an upper room, often in total solitude, poor Mary Gurnett spent the weary hours of her sad life; not all sad to her, however, for her clouded intellect usually blunted all her sense of sorrow, and she would amuse herself like a little child, and the room would echo with peals of joyous laughter, painfully interrupted, at times, however, by some sudden transition, during which her mind seemed to awaken into thought and intelligence.

Mary Gurnett was an only child, but in spite of this usually strong claim upon parental affection, she received little love from her father, who seemed rather to dislike her than the reverse.

From her infancy she had been subject to severe epileptic fits; these ceased when she grew up to womanhood, but left her mind a wreck. Though she was called by the neighbours "soft," and a "natural," and an "innocent," she was neither what is correctly designated insane, nor was she an idiot.

So long as the mother lived, who had cherished her child so tenderly and lovingly, Mary Gurnett had been shielded from all sorrow and suffering. Her mother was her constant companion; she worked for her, she amused her, she watched her, she listened with unwearying patience to her rambling talk, and bore all her husband's tyranny and harshness uncomplainingly, so he would only spare her child.

In those early days, Mary had sometimes known the pleasures of meeting childish companions.

Helen Cheney, also an only daughter, and the child of her mother's cousin, the wife of Ralph Cheney, had spent many a day at the mill, and occasionally the Clifton's had been there, of whose visits, as boys, she had a lively recollection.

But with her mother's death, and the advent of her stepmother, all was changed for poor Mary. She was no longer allowed to

have the run of the house; though quiet and harmless, she was confined almost entirely to the room we have spoken of, only being taken occasionally into the garden, planted round with fir-trees.

At times, her father and stepmother came to her room, but she was generally left quite alone, or, with no other companion than a cross-grained, sullen old woman, called Judith, who acted as a sort of female keeper, though Mary's situation hardly called for such an attendant.

Ann Settle, whom upon rare occasions Mrs. Gurnett allowed to visit her unfortunate step-daughter, was a prime favourite with the latter; for she would listen patiently to the poor girl's incoherent talk, and bring her some little bit of finery, which Mary dearly loved. A knot of ribbon, or an apron of printed calico would please her for days; and yet, by a refinement of cruelty, as it appeared, her stepmother condemned her to wear very common homespun garments of sad-coloured stuff, and only furnished her room in the barest and most penurious manner possible, seeming to grudge her also, anything beyond a scant allowance of coarse food, which was, however, at times, augmented or improved, when, for a brief period, Yack Gurnett's heart would seem touched by something approaching paternal affection.

Now, there was really no reason why Mary Gurnett should have been made to lead such a life. She was not really insane, though treated as such. She was remarkably gentle and civil in her manners, neat and clean in the poor attire she was allowed to wear, and very well conducted at her meals. Her mind, as we have already said, was a wreck, but there was no absolute poverty of ideas, her brain was fertile enough in them; indeed, she retained, to a great extent, such ideas as existed in her mind before its overthrow. Thus, she would often talk of Dick Clifton, sailing his little boats on the Eamont, and of John stealing the apples from her father's favourite tree at the bottom of the orchard. But she had little if any control over her ideas, they would come and go quite at random; and to keep her to any particular subject was a moral impossibility, indeed, at times, her conversation would be simply unintelligible, and only a rapid succession of disjointed sentences.

It was only at rare intervals that her affliction assumed a more violent form, and on these occasions she would talk wildly, scream and laugh, or sob, and gesticulate in a menacing manner. Occasionally, also, she was subject to illusions. She would fancy she saw objects, which only existed in her own weak imagination, and according to the nature of these illusions, so would she evince fear, or grief, or mirth.

The casement of the small room occupied by Mary Gurnett, was partly concealed by the ivy which grew thickly over the wall of the house, and thus at all times the chamber was but dimly lighted, and it was a bare, poor-looking room, with white-washed walls and an uncovered floor; two or three hard rush-bottomed chairs, a low truckle bed, and a few other articles of the simplest and commonest kind, forming the sole furniture of the apartment.

It was a few days after the visit of the Cliftons and Miss Cheney to Shap Abbey. The weather had changed, and the bright sunshine and summer heat had given place to cloudy skies and cold winds.

The room looked almost dusky, though it was yet early in the afternoon; and Ann Settle, as she sat with her sewing near the casement window, let it fall on her lap, and a look of mingled pity, sorrow, and indignation stole over her expressive countenance, as she watched the hapless girl, condemned to pass her life in that dreary chamber, with no brighter prospect from its casement, than the waste patch of garden ground, and the dark melancholy-looking firs, and she wondered how the poor prisoner could be so cheerful.

This afternoon Mary was particularly happy. She had got her dear Anne with her for an hour or two, Mrs. Gurnett requiring Judith's services herself; and Anne had brought her a little straw gipsy hat, tied with cherry-coloured ribbons, which she was alternately putting on her head and then laying aside, whilst she tried on one after another, almost every article in her poor and strangely assorted wardrobe.

Mrs. Gurnett would have strictly confined her step-daughter to common home-spun clothes, but the latter had an insatiable craving after finery, and whenever she was able to escape from her room for a brief period, she would find her way, with great stealth and caution, to the sleeping apartment of the miller and his wife, and their purloin any article of dress that took her fancy, which she would forthwith convey to her own apartment, and secrete with the cunning of a magpie, and never bring out, save when she was alone, or when Ann Settle was her companion.

Of course, Mrs. Gurnett missed her property, and had her suspicions as to who was the delinquent; but as any attempt to search into Mary's hordes had the effect of bringing on one of her violent modes, and as all her step-mother's best garments were safe under lock and key, the matter was let rest. Just when Ann Settle began to watch her, Mary seemed to have completed her toilette, greatly to her own satisfaction, to judge from the smile on her face, as she curtsied and figured about before the old

cracked looking-glass, which had the effect of distorting the human countenance into the most extraordinary shape.

Mary was a tall, gaunt-looking girl, with large dark eyes, looking darker still from thetr contrast with her pale, thin face. Under happier circumstances she would probably have developed into what is called a fine woman, but ill health, want of fresh air and exercise, and a sparing and poor diet, had all contributed to rob her of her personal charms, and her emaciated figure seemed almost unnatural in its height, and her face wan and weird-like.

She had arrayed herself in an old silken petticoat of her step-mother's, over which she had put a camblet quilted coat of her own, and then a silk spencer, also the property of Mrs. Gurnett, the loss of which that worthy dame had bitterly deplored, as it had still been in tolerably good order. The gipsy hat surmounted a mob-cap, trimmed with real lace, once the property of Mary's own mother, conferred by the miller on his second wife, and reclaimed by his daughter, on one of her marauding expeditions; a fan, which she fluttered in her hand, completed the singular appearance of of the poor girl.

"Prithee, Ann," said Mary, turning abrutly to her companion, and not noticing the look of pitying sorrow on her face, "hast heard how young John Clifton is going to get married to cousin Helen."

"Nay, nay; you are wrong," replied Ann, whilst her heart gave a great throb, for alas, that heart was of late far too full of thoughts of gay, handsome John Clifton. "'Tis not John, but Richard, that is getting married."

"I know what I know," answered Mary, with a sly laugh. "Eyh, but 'twill be a braw wedding. Helen might ask me to be her bridesmaid, sure that silk night-gown would be mighty becoming for me. I'll just try it on." And Mary began hastily to divest herself of the spencer.

"But what have you heard, Mary," asked Ann, eagerly, forgetting, in her jealous fear and anxiety, how improbable it was that Mary should be better informed than herself.

"Happy is the wooing that is not long a-doing," answered Mary, shaking her head sagely. "He preaches for nothing, you know," she added, suddenly changing the subject; "heaps of money for making brown suits, and blue suits, and black suits; but the praying, expounding the Scriptures, singing hymns—that's all done for love. Methodists don't take money, Ann; 'tis only the parsons do that."

"Oh, fudge!" exclaimed Ann sharply, vexed that Mary had changed the subject of her discourse. "Methodists are as fond of money as anybody else, and old Patterdale can cheat wi' anyone."

"Owd red-head, she ca's him," sighed Mary, as she seated herself on the edge of her poor pallet bed; "but 'tisn't red hair Dick has, it's like gold, Ann. I heard father tell her once she was ower fond o' the lad. Eyh, but it wad be a dreadful thing to love any one, and they not love you, wouldn't it?"

Ann Settle almost echoed Mary's sigh, but started with surprise as the latter said, mournfully, and in a very rational manner, "Young John is so handsome, isn't he? and so good. Whiles o' night I dream of him, and that he calls me his Polly, as he used to do when I was a bit of a girl, and he would say that I should be his little wife; and then I dream we are nutting again, and picking cowslips. When I wake and find it's all a dream, I am so sorry. But I mustn't think o' these things when he's married to cousin Helen, must I. Oh, but I wad like just once more to see his bonny face."

"'Tisn't John, I've told you, Mary, that is going to marry Helen Cheney," replied Ann; "but I hardly thought you remembered him, Mary. You've never talked to me about him before."

"Suppose you give him a ride on 'owd Nick,'" exclaimed Mary, suddenly, in a voice of great glee, whilst she heard dancing about the room. "Owd Nick would run off with him; wouldn't that be rare fun, Ann? Oh! but I would be glad if Nick would bite him."

"Bite who?" echoed Jane.

"Why, Bump Willis. Eyh, but I hate him; I do hate him, Ann. It isn't right to hate people, Patterdale says; but I can't love Bump Willis. He used to make father cross with mother, and now he makes him cross with me. Sometimes when he's been here, mother comes o' nights and sits wi' me. I think she comes to take care of me. Oh, but I should like to see him," she added, after a moment's pause; the wild, angry look her face had worn when she was speaking of Willis yielding to the usual placid expression of her features. "Couldn't Patterdale take him word how I would like to see him? And there's cousin Helen, and Mr. Cheney, that was always kind to poor me. I've heard my father and my new mother saying that Mr. Cheney and his fast wench of a daughter would soon be beggars, and that the poor-house wad be their lodging some day; but if Helen is getting married to Dick or John, or whichever it is, that won't happen, will it, Ann? What makes you sigh, Ann?"

"I didn't sigh," replied the latter, though she had sighed, and sighed very deeply, as she often did lately, when any conversation brought John Clifton to her mind.

"Nay, but thou didst sigh," answered Mary, taking off her

hat, and setting herself at the table, from whence she took a pair of knit mittens turned up with white calico, which, from their size and the manner in which they were wrinkled about Mary's attenuated hands, seemed to indicate that they, too, had formerly been in the possession of her step-mother. "I know why you sigh. Poor Ann, you have got a new mother, too. Is your father frightened of her? Let us sing a psalm."

And with her usual versatility, Mary assumed a solemn expression of countenance, such as she had witnessed in Patterdale, turned up her eyes, and exclaimed:

"I am going to be born again, Ann."

"Hadn't you better try on the silk night-gown," asked Ann, wishful to divert Mary from the subject of regeneration, which proved, at times, too exciting a topic for her.

"To be sure, I had most forgotten it," replied Mary, finally divesting herself of the spencer, which she had already half pulled off. "But dost see, Ann, this spencer isn't so good as it might be, and I maun hev a new one for the wedding; I wouldn't disgrace the Cheneys; they are my own cousins, and we have got money among us. Helen's mother had money, and so had my mother, lots of money; I wonder where my father keeps it; perhaps she's gotten it—you know who, Ann. I wish I knew where it was. Eyh, but I would like to have some. I could buy a farm for young John. Father says he'll lose his farm some day, and then father will have it. Why, what a great rich man father will be; he'll have Mr. Cheney's house and young John's." Mary paused for a moment, and then exclaimed suddenly, as she started up:

"There's some one in the garden, Ann; happen 'tis John, come for some of father's apples; let us call to him."

And yielding to her strange delusion, which had taken her back to the days of her childhood, when John Clifton had robbed the miller's orchard, Mary Gurnett brushed past Ann, and leant out of the casement, open, though the day was cold, for the poor girl pined for the fresh air, and would often leave the window open even in the depth of winter. Ann heard some one call out from the garden; Mary drew back her head in a moment, and then, with a sort of chuckle, seized a large jug of water which stood beside her, leant out of the window again, and pouring out the whole contents of the pitcher, she exclaimed in a shrill voice:

"There, now, Bump Willis, how do you like that?"